

THE ROLE OF WOMEN  
IN  
THE PEACE CORPS

by  
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Presented to the American Culture Faculty  
at the University of Michigan-Flint  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Liberal Studies  
in  
American Culture

August 1988

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. William J. Meyer, my thesis supervisor, for his encouragement, patience, and helpful discussions on the role of women and the Peace Corps. My thanks also to Dr. Maxine Baca Zinn for agreeing to be the second reader.

I am indebted to Dr. Douglas Kelley for the loan of material on the Peace Corps and for first-hand information on the early days of the Peace Corps.

My special thanks go to the ten women Volunteers who so graciously shared their Peace Corps experiences with me.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Role of Women in the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps is a unique American experiment in international development, and its progress has mirrored the times from the euphoric 60s, through the difficult 70s, and into the more professional, pragmatic 80s. The climate of protest and of righting wrongs that pervaded the 1960s was ideal for the feminist revival as women became unhappy with their role in social movements such as civil rights for blacks and other minorities and the protest against the war in Vietnam and learned to work for women's rights and sex equality. I plan to examine the history of the Peace Corps to see if it is really an Equal Opportunity Employer offering equality and a chance to serve as indicated by its first Director, Sargent Shriver. (Shriver, 1986:19) I will examine the literature on women in the Peace Corps to see if there was a movement within the Peace Corps seeking equal treatment and protesting discrimination by gender. The Peace Corps was created on March 1, 1961, which brought it into existence at the time of social movements and campus unrest; in fact, the Peace Corps was growing at a fantastic rate when the seminar on women's issues, which is credited with being the first women's liberation group, was held in 1967 at the campus of the University of Chicago. (Editorial Research Reports, 1973:15) I will interview ten women Returned

Peace Corps Volunteers and ask them about the whole experience of joining Peace Corps. In discussing the interviews, I will show if the Peace Corps really offered an equal opportunity for them, how they were viewed in the host country, and if the prevailing attitude in the United States presented a problem for them when they returned. I will present a summary of what the Volunteers are doing at this time, which makes a comment on their Peace Corps service and on the Women's Movement.

The Peace Corps has had its ups and downs, but it is a government agency which still receives funds from Congress for operating purposes. It has made its own place in American culture; its relationship to the American Culture Program is as an American institution which shows that equal treatment of men and women, at least at the Volunteer level can work. In a small way it may give an insight into a way of thinking about women's rights and an approach to social change.

#### Peace Corps Precedents

Gerald T. Rice (1985:254) writes: "A 1963 Harris poll showed that the Peace Corps was the third most popular act of the Kennedy administration." And it still is popular with some people. The Detroit Free Press (June 5, 1988: 14A) in an excerpt from his new book, quotes Lee Iacocca as proposing drafting "every able-bodied man and woman... between the ages of 18 and 25 for one year of military or public service...[This] public service would include the

Peace Corps." This says a lot for the regard in which the Peace Corps is still held.

The idea of people helping less fortunate people is timeless. There have been American missionaries traveling overseas since 1809, not only to preach, but also "to build schools, teach trades, and educate doctors and nurses," (Rice, 1985:2) a tradition that continues to this day with organizations like the Society of Friends (Quakers) and Operation Crossroads Africa. International Voluntary Services (IVS) had been called the "prototype of the Peace Corps." (Hoopes, 1966:39) Since 1953, IVS, nonreligious and nondenominational although supported by a religious coalition, has sent young college graduates to foreign countries to work at the grass roots level. (Wingenbach, 1963:36)

The 1st Peace Corps Annual Report (1962:4) gives credit for the Peace Corps' philosophy to American philosopher William James who, in an 1904 address, said that something should be substituted for people's desire for war. War is seen as heroic, and soldiers are manly. He wrote that both the soldier and the non-combatant want the "thrills and excitement," "the military ideals of hardihood and discipline" (James, 1971:4) of war. James held the belief it was each person's right and duty to take his own experience seriously and to use it as a basis for thought and action, moving from a closed mentality to an open-minded, imaginative examination of many

alternatives. Thus, in his pamphlet "The Moral Equivalent of War," published in 1910, James' alternative to war was to be a moral equivalent, "an army conscripted for war against poverty, ignorance, and disease." (Hoopes, 1966: 35) This effort would help the less fortunate of the world and would inspire the young soldiers. Voluntarily accepted poverty would take the place of the strenuous military life as a safeguard against effeminacy. At the same time it would help free Americans from the fear of poverty which causes materialism and indifference to the suffering of others. John E. Smith (1963:41) writes: "James' thought has often been characterized as 'volunteerism'--the doctrine that effort, activity, and will have primacy over the acquisition of theoretical knowledge..." James' philosophy must be seen "as a means to prepare each man to deal fruitfully with his own experiences." (Brennan, 1968:157) It must also be stretched to give Peace Corps women a place in this army that fights poverty and unites the world.

Following the Spanish-American War in 1901, American soldiers were asked to stay on in the Philippines to teach English, and some of them did. The same year, under civilian authority, several hundred American Volunteer teachers arrived on "a military transport, the U.S.S. Thomas," (Hoopes, 1966:36) and these Thomasites and others stayed until 1933. Little wonder that Peace Corps officials do not care for the comparison between Peace

Corps Volunteers in the Philippines and the Thomasites; it smacks too much of colonialism. However, some of the motives of both groups are the same: "a desire to help, a quest for new experience, a longing to do something significant." (Guthrie, 1966:15) This service probably helped deter Filipino independence for a time, but it left a legacy of good will for Peace Corps Volunteers.

Roy Hoopes (1966:41) gives credit to Doug Kelly for doing valuable pioneer work in 1951 by forming "the International Development Placement Association, a recruiting center and employment agency for American students who wanted to work in the underdeveloped countries at local wages." The organization was broken up in 1954 because of lack of funding.

Two emergency work-relief and vocational training programs started by President Franklin Roosevelt were the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933, and the National Youth Administration, 1935. (Wingenbach, 1963:20) These programs, like William James's proposals, served "to channel the energies of young people into constructive work," (Hoopes, 1966:37) and set the tone for Peace Corps.

Credit should go to Congressman Henry S. Reuss of Wisconsin who spoke of creating a "Point Four Youth Corps" (Hoopes, 1966:47-48; Wingenbach, 1963:23-24) when lecturing on college campuses and who later submitted legislation calling for a study of his proposal. His study was funded under the Mutual Security Act of 1960 and



was conducted by the University of Colorado Research Foundation. Reuss's proposal linked the youth corps to the United States government and the United States "foreign-aid program." (Hoopes, 1966:48) His proposal also caught the attention of the Organization of Young Democratic Clubs and the National Student Association, two organizations "to a very considerable extent, responsible for the 'spontaneous' enthusiasm which greeted candidate Kennedy's proposal in the Presidential campaign of 1960." (Hoopes, 1966:48)

Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota introduced a bill in June 1960 for an overseas youth program in which he used the name "Peace Corps." (Rice, 1985:11) He did not expect quick passage but hoped to awaken congressional and public interest. (Hoopes, 1966:50) His proposal became part of the Presidential campaign.

John F. Kennedy is credited with "defining" the Peace Corps in Ann Arbor on October 14, 1960. According to Coates Redmon he neither defined nor mentioned the words "Peace Corps," but after his speech, "the peace corps idea had been launched." (Redmon, 1986:5) Kennedy touched the students as never before, and on-the-spot committees were formed to push the idea. The peace corps idea kept the young people excited and stirred up and helped the college movement supporting Kennedy grow.

On October 27, 1960, General James M. Gavin, speaking at a conference of educators and businessmen, suggested

"a peacetime volunteer force be started as an alternative to military service," (Redmon, 1986:15) and received a standing ovation. The news of his well received speech was passed along to the Kennedy camp, and on November 2, 1960, at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, Kennedy proposed "a peace corps of talented young men and women willing to serve their country..." (Redmon, 1986:20) On Election eve Kennedy answered a question on a television program by stating "I have suggested having a peace corps of young men and women...working in different countries which are backward..." (Hoopes, 1966:56)

It is interesting that twenty-five years later, Redmon could write in a now it can be told manner:

The Peace Corps grew out of some creative liberal thinking, the purist political expediency, a full moon on the rise at a passing moment of pacifistic patriotism between the cold war and the Vietnam War, the all-American drive to do good and be loved, and a lot of good luck. (Redmon, 1986:5-6)

Hoopes put his finger on it when he wrote in 1966:

...The Peace Corps was created not to eliminate worldwide poverty, but to provide an outlet for a whole generation of frustrated, idealistic young Americans who wanted to show that they cared about the poverty and lack of opportunity in the emerging nations. (Hoopes, 1966:29)

#### Peace Corps Creation

Interest in the Peace Corps did not die down after the election, but Kennedy was "engrossed in the great talent hunt for the new members of his administration." (Rice, 1985:34) President Kennedy gave the job of making and coordinating plans for the Peace Corps to Sargent

Shriver on January 21, 1961. (Rice, 1985:35) Studies and reports poured in offering ideas for consideration while scores of people from all areas were consulted. But none of these ideas seemed right until a position paper, "The Towering Task," co-authored by Warren Wiggins and William Josephson came to Shriver's attention. Wiggins advocated a fast start with a large number of volunteers because "a small, cautious Peace Corps...may not receive the attention and talent it will require even for preventing trouble...[while] a slow, cautious start may maximize the chance of failure." (Rice 1985:41) A Task Force had the job of putting this all together, and one of its recommendations was for an Executive Order to create the Peace Corps immediately, fund it by authority "in Section 400 of the Mutual Security Act of 1954," staff it with "recruits from the colleges and universities in the summer of 1961," and present Congress with successful "Volunteers in the field." (Rice, 1985:42) "Another [recommendation] was the decision to adopt the name 'Peace Corps'..." (Rice, 1985:43) President Kennedy received the report on February 28 and created the Peace Corps by executive order on March 1, 1961. (Carey, 1970:15) Executive Order 10924 stated, in part:

The Secretary of State shall establish an agency in the Department of State which shall be known as the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps shall be headed by a Director.

The Peace Corps shall be responsible for the training and service abroad of men and women of the United States in new programs of assistance to nations and areas of the world...(Carey 1970:245)

Congress passed the Peace Corps Act on September 22, 1961, and formally established the agency. The Declaration of Purpose is as follows.

The Congress of the United States declares that it is the policy of the United States and the purpose of this Act to promote world peace and friendship through a Peace Corps, which shall make available to interested countries and areas men and women of the United States qualified for service abroad and willing to serve, under conditions of hardship if necessary, to help the peoples of such countries and areas in meeting their needs for trained manpower, and to help promote a better understanding of the American people on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of the American people. (Carey, 1970:245)

In between the signing of the executive order and the passing of legislation for the permanent establishment of the Peace Corps, fifty-one Volunteers were selected, trained in secondary school education programs, and sent on August 30, 1962, to serve in Ghana. (Carey, 1970:35) This organization of the Peace Corps within six months was an enormous accomplishment for Director Shriver and his staff. Shriver assembled a young, competent, dedicated staff and then traveled abroad to interest other countries in Peace Corps programs. The initial training programs were set up by outside groups, such as "colleges and universities, international agencies, and private organizations." (Carey, 1970:29) An entrance examination "was developed by the Educational Testing Service" using "specifications" worked out by psychologists, which was to be administered by the "U.S. Civil Service Commission...at their centers." (Carey, 1970:33) They tried to think of everything.

## Peace Corps Rules and Regulations

The 1st Peace Corps Annual Report (1962:8) reported that the Peace Corps policies were formulated during the period from March to June 1961. The policies are:

First, it was decided that the Peace Corps would go only where invited.

Second, Volunteers overseas would work for the host government or for a private agency or organization within the foreign country, serving under host country supervisors, and working with host country co-workers wherever possible.

Third, Volunteers would not be "advisers" but "doers."

Fourth, Volunteers would serve for two years, without salary or draft exemption.

Fifth, Volunteers would be provided a living allowance enabling them to live in a modest manner comparable to the circumstances of their co-workers.

Sixth, Volunteers would enjoy no diplomatic privileges or immunities, have no PX or commissary rights, receive no 'hardship' or cost-of-living allowances and have no vehicles unless needed for their job.

Seventh, Volunteers would learn to speak the language of the host country, learn to appreciate its customs, be able to discuss adequately and intelligently the United States when questioned, refrain from political or religious proselytizing, and set as the standard of their success how well the requested job was fulfilled.

Eighth, a termination allowance of \$75 for each month of satisfactory service was established to help the Volunteer get started again in this country.

Ninth, the Peace Corps would be open to all qualified, single Americans above 18 and for married couples with no dependents under 18, where each had a needed skill.

Tenth, a college degree would not be a requirement for service. A special effort was made to attract farmers and craftsmen who possessed skills and experience but no degrees.

Eleventh, the highest medical, psychological, and character standards were established and it was

determined that final selection would be made at the conclusion of training.

Twelfth, it was decided that the hardships of Peace Corps life would be featured in recruitment so no candidate would misjudge the terms and conditions under which he volunteered to serve.

Finally, candidates, trainees, and Volunteers would be told they could resign from the Peace Corps at any time. The Peace Corps wanted only those who served freely, a decision now made each day by each Volunteer.

There has been very little change in these early policies, although a Volunteer told me the termination allowance has been raised twice and now stands at \$200 for each month of satisfactory service. Much of the fighting over policy took place during the first year. Kennedy wanted to give the Volunteers draft exemption, but during the election campaign there was so much opposition that the idea was dropped. Instead, an informal policy was adopted by the Selective Service to give deferment to a Volunteer because his work "was in the national interest." (Hoopes, 1966:67) Starting in 1967 the selective service became a problem for the Peace Corps and remained so for the balance of the Vietnam War. In 1970 "nearly 5 per cent of male volunteers had draft problems and about 1 per cent terminated their service early for draft reasons." (Carey, 1970:209) Faye reported that she and her husband did not return home for his mother's funeral in 1967 because he would have been "ripe for the draft." When they did return at the end of their service in 1967, her husband immediately started graduate school with no consequences.

Apparently there was controversy over allowing women in the Peace Corps. (Hoopes, 1966) Male and female Volunteers working on the same project was seen as a problem because of the "romantic temptations" involved, but "the Quakers and Operation Crossroads Africa" (Wingenbach, 1963:65) advised that this would be beneficial rather than present a problem. Some advisory reports on the Peace Corps suggested that women should not serve because of the "dangers of rape and single-girl pregnancies." (Rice, 1985:127) There were opinions and policies on almost every issue concerning the Volunteers. " If a single female became pregnant, she was sent home immediately; the father-- often a fellow Volunteer--was allowed to remain in the program." (Rice, 1985:127) This "catastrophe" was handled by making arrangements "with the Florence Crittenden home for unwed mothers in Washington to take care of any pregnant Peace Corps Volunteers." (Redmon, 1986:97) Married couples were accepted in the Peace Corps, and a policy directive was issued allowing Volunteer marriage during service, but if the wife became pregnant, "the general rule is that the couple would have to return to the United States." (Wingenbach, 1963:67) Rice wrote that Shriver would "decide each situation on a case-by-case basis." (1985:118) Some officials argued that Volunteers should be provided with "contraceptive devices," but Shriver vetoed this because "contraception was a private matter." (Rice, 1985:118)

Velma Adams reported that Volunteers were told resignations would not be accepted unless there was a family emergency that demanded their attention. Someone must have belatedly realized that this was not the official position because during a visit to the Philippines, Shriver "told the Volunteers that anyone was free to return to the United States whenever he felt he must." (Adams, 1964:248) To discourage Volunteers from leaving early, Shriver ruled that "the federal government would pay for fares home only at the end of the full two years of service" (Rice, 1985: 117) with certain exceptions.

A problem not considered in 1960 is drug abuse. The Peace Corps officials claim that drug abuse by Volunteers has not been a problem, but they say the Peace Corps has no place for drug users and warn the Volunteers that they are subject to the host country's laws. Privately former Volunteers admit that there has been a fair amount of experimentation with drugs. (Carey, 1970:208) This may be one of the problems not mentioned by the Peace Corps. Mary heard about a Volunteer who died from experimenting with "magic mushrooms" while serving in Ecuador in 1976. She hastened to add that the Peace Corps did not sanction this kind of behavior.



## CHAPTER II

### SEXIST OR NONSEXIST

#### Role of Staff and of Volunteers

In 1986 Sargent Shriver wrote an article on the Peace Corps for a book celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Peace Corps which included the following:

More controversial was the decision to give women the same opportunity to serve. The conventional wisdom held that the Peace Corps inevitably had to be a man's world. We said it would not be, and since the first days, nearly one out of three volunteers has been a woman. The role of the two genders has been exactly the same throughout the Peace Corps' history. (Shriver, 1986:19)

In the early days John Kennedy may not have been too clear on who would serve in the Peace Corps. Rice (1985:15) gave this quote from his speech on November 2, 1960, at the Cow Palace in San Francisco: "...A Peace Corps of talented young men willing and able to serve their country in this fashion for three years as an alternative to peacetime selective service..." Later in the speech when he spoke of the Peace Corps as a weapon against Communism, he said: "Our young men and women, dedicated to freedom, are fully capable of overcoming the efforts of Mr. Khrushchev's missionaries..." (Rice, 1985:15)

Roy Hoopes touched on this subject:

It was generally believed that women would not be eligible for the Peace Corps. However, women are very much needed in the Peace Corps--as teachers, home economists, and nurses, both in the field of child and public health. (Hoopes, 1966:153)

Traditionally, these have been the jobs that were acceptable for women to perform. And while the literature

indicates that as far as the Peace Corps was concerned, women were accepted the same as men, this was not always the case in the host country. Sometimes the country requesting the Volunteers asked for men Volunteers; then the Peace Corps complied with their request and did not see this as discrimination on the part of the Peace Corps. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know what the rules and regulations are for making selections. Anne in 1964 was refused a chance to work on a communications project in Columbia because the project was being staffed by fifty male Volunteers, and yet she was paired with a male Volunteer in Brazil, a country whose men were not accustomed to women who worked or to women who had any authority. The Peace Corps could have done something to back up the efforts of women Volunteers in nontraditional jobs. Both Ruth, in Sierra Leone in 1974, and Mary, in Ecuador in 1976, said they knew female agriculture experts who had a very difficult time working with the farmers in their countries because they were women. The Peace Corps could have emphasized to the incountry staff that these women were experts in their field. Sandy, a recruiter in the Detroit Peace Corps office, said that in choosing Volunteers today a candidate's qualifications are considered more important than a candidate's sex unless the host country makes a specific request.

Sargent Shriver took pride in the fact that "by 1963 one-third of the seven thousand Volunteers serving around

the world were female." (Rice, 1985:127) Unfortunately, very few women were serving on the headquarters staff. Shriver told the Senate in February 1964 that "he had not recruited as many women administrators as he would have liked." (Rice, 1985:127) Shriver had to take responsibility for this in the beginning because as Rice (1985) noted Shriver was in charge of the Peace Corps in every sense of the word and took a hand in almost everything and decided almost every policy. Since then more women have made it to upper-echelon posts at the Peace Corps, including two women who have been appointed Director, but women are more likely to be appointed Assistant Representative to a country or Deputy Director of a Division (Rice, 1985) instead of Country Director or Director of a Division. This situation is excused by saying that the Peace Corps is so much better in this area than contemporary federal agencies.

## Rise of Women's Rights Movement

The "first women's lib group" began as a seminar on women's issues at the University of Chicago in 1967. (Editorial Research Reports, 1973:15) These women crusaded for civil rights for blacks and other minorities, demonstrated against the war in Vietnam, and supported draft resistance with the men. Unfortunately, these movements which were dedicated to an egalitarian ideal and opposed to the prevailing power structure relegated them to making coffee, typing, and helping carry out policy decided by the male members who led the action. No consideration was given to women's rights and concerns.

This is a sort of replay of the abolition movement of the 1830s which led to the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention where women's rights were championed and of the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment which followed the long drawn out drive for women's suffrage.

Skolnick and Currie (1982:183) agreed that "the depression and World War II pushed aside feminist concerns" and that in "the late 1940s and early 1950s...the 'domestic' role of women dominated American culture." And it is this "middle-class dream of family, security, and upward mobility" and "stereotyped women's roles" (Skolnick and Currie, 1982:184) that are so hard to change or fight against. Traditional sex roles make professional women responsible for job and home and family. The lack of sympathy for women's concerns on the part of men gradually

led to the consciousness of feminine oppression on the part of women, and hence the seminar and the forming of women's groups. According to Skolnick and Currie:

...It was political experience with radical men that led radical women to the consciousness of women as a distinctly oppressed group, and, therefore, a group with distinctive interests. (1982:183)

But this was not the case with the Peace Corps. All of the women Volunteers said that they went through the same training as the men. Faye who trained in California in 1965 said men and women went through the survival weekend in the wilderness. Sally, who did her training in Senegal in 1978, said men and women were treated the same both in learning the CLAD method of teaching English and in training other teachers in the CLAD method. None of the Volunteers felt that they were discriminated by the Peace Corps in their assignments. Anne understood why she was not offered the project in Columbia with fifty male Volunteers in 1964. As she said, "In 1964 we just did not question such things." Besides, the situation would not have been acceptable in Columbia either. The concensus seemed to be that any problems the Volunteers had which were based on gender were the result of the culture of the country they were serving in and not the practice of the Peace Corps. The Volunteers had to learn to work within the culture of their particular country. Ruth in Sierra Leone in 1974 said she practiced making requests and offering suggestions instead of telling the men she worked with what to do. This attitude worked well for her, but

at the same time she said she learned to be assertive in the Peace Corps. She learned to make her position clear on certain subjects so that awkward situations did not develop. That was a point that Kebe, who served in Liberia in 1973, made. She said that when a local teacher suggested that he become her friend, she said that just depends upon what you mean by friend. In Cameroon in 1983 Pat, who rode a motorcycle and wore jeans and a helmet, was told, "You are not a woman." She replied, "I'm an American." After that she was accepted, jeans and all. Pat thought that in Cameroon people knew that women from other countries acted differently and could accept women riding motorcycles. However, she said that women who went to bars and drank with the men were treated as prostitutes. Female Volunteers had to know what was not acceptable and had to avoid offending racial and cultural sensitivities. The complications that arise for female Volunteers because of cross-cultural differences are seen more as a problem for the host country, and, incidentally, for the women of the host country, and not as a problem that would cause Volunteers to seek a solution by joining together in a movement for women's rights.

## Literature on Peace Corps Women

The search for literature on women in the Peace Corps was disappointing; basically, there is none. The literature on the Peace Corps reads like an advertisement for the Peace Corps; most of the books seem to have been designed to "sell" rather than analyze the Peace Corps. The literature focuses on the Volunteer, male and female, because the success of the Peace Corps depends on the success of the Volunteer. It is difficult to find statistics that list the number of women Volunteers, even in the Peace Corps Annual Reports. One statement was: "By 1963 one-third of the seven thousand Volunteers serving around the world were female." (Rice, 1985:127) In the 25th Peace Corps Annual Report the following appeared: "Today approximately 5,700 American men and women are serving as Peace Corps Volunteers in 62 countries. They are evenly divided, men and women." (1986:23) The usual listing is by total number of Volunteers.

The Peace Corps is justifiably proud of its nonsexist record for Volunteers. Women must pass the same examination as men and meet the same medical, character, and psychological standards as men. They receive the same living allowance and termination allowance as men. They go through exactly the same training, including physical conditioning and exercises, serve the same period of time, and do the same job or work, except where the host country requests that a position be filled by a man. These points

are emphasized in the literature on the Peace Corps. When the problems, experiences, successes, and letters from Peace Corps Volunteers are written about, they include ones from female Volunteers, from male Volunteers, and from couples. There are some books and articles written by Volunteers themselves about their experiences in the Peace Corps, but I have not found any that charges sex discrimination by the Peace Corps.

Information on women in the administrative staff was particularly difficult to obtain. Rice listed three women who "made it to upper-echelon posts at Peace Corps headquarters" (1985:127) during Shriver's term. Redmon (1986) lists six more, two of whom, Nancy Gore and Sally Bowles, had been on the original staff in March 1961. Redmon (1986:375) wrote of "the heavily male chauvinistic thinking that existed at Peace Corps Headquarters." Betty Harris, "a pioneering print and broadcast journalist and executive in New York before women had such jobs," (Redmon, 1986:93) had her appointment to head a women's division canceled by the deputy director because he thought she was "too wild." (Redmon, 1986:95) Harris, a friend of Shriver's, became the deputy associate director of the Office of Peace Corps Volunteers and one to be reckoned with

...because she was often the only woman attending senior staff meetings and always the only one who would do battle with the men. (Some of the other women in positions of authority who were let in on policy discussions...were at least as much valued for their family connections as for their intelligence or the soundness of their opinions. In any case, they rarely crossed male colleagues.) (Redmon, 1986:112)



According to Rice (1985) its position on pregnancy was the only flaw in the Peace Corps' nonsexist record, and its position on sexual equality put it way in front of other federal agencies. According to Redmon (1986:112) Betty Harris, who founded Ms. magazine,

...had been shaken by the depth of prejudice against women among the senior men at the Peace Corps, whom she had originally assessed as being an uncommonly enlightened breed.

She was particularly incensed by a memo to Shriver from the medical division entreating him to bring "our married Peace Corps girls home if they became pregnant." (Redmon, 1986:112) In her own memo Harris called this unequal treatment of women, insulting women and the host country, and not giving the couple a choice of whether to stay in the country or to go home. Shriver's decision, after consulting with the Kennedy family and the weekend guests, was "that married Peace Corps Volunteers should be able to have their babies overseas." (Redmon, 1986:113) It is difficult to know what is right; it seems married Peace Corps couples should have some say in the decision. Several of the Volunteers thought conditions in the local hospital were less than acceptable and voiced some concern. This issue, though important, was only a small part of the decisions that had to be made. Bill Haddad, Associate Director for Planning, Evaluation and Research, said:

Except for some of the stuff about marriage and pregnancy, which dragged on too long, the decision making process went 'boom boom' at the Peace Corps. It was usually short and snappy. (Redmon, 1986:114)

The women Volunteers I interviewed were not concerned by the "stuff about marriage and pregnancy," although some did agree that the local hospitals were not modern and the modern hospitals might be too far away for an emergency.

In 1978 President Carter signed an amendment to the Peace Corps Act "highlighting the importance of women in development program." (25th Peace Corps Annual Report, 1986:18) Basically this meant that the Peace Corps programs, projects, and activities had to include those of interest to women and had to involve women in the overall developing process. The timing is off because the data cited does not reflect any changes that might be brought about by this 1978 amendment, but an interesting article appeared in 1981 in Economic Development and Cultural Change entitled "U.S. Aid and Third World Women: The Impact of Peace Corps Programs." This article, drawing on data from 1970, 1976, and early 1978, comes to the conclusion that "aid programs benefit men more than women," "female PCVs work disproportionately with female recipients," and "Peace Corps programs reflect and reinforce local norms disapproving of authority relationships between males and females in occupational settings." (Cohn, Wood, and Haag, 1981:811-812) They go on to suggest that it is Peace Corps programming that "determines the level of participation by women" and that the Peace Corps should insure "appropriate programming." (Cohn et al, 1981:811) The Peace Corps is addressing this.

But bureaucracy moves slowly, and there are some things the Peace Corps cannot do. The Peace Corps does not go into a country unless it is invited, and the Peace Corps can be and has been invited to leave. The Peace Corps has to work with a country, and cultural sensitivity is the hallmark of the Peace Corps' approach to that work.

For nearly twenty-five years Peace Corps Volunteers worked within the cultural framework of the communities in which they lived to bring about improvements in the lives of individuals. Local women were encouraged to participate in all phases of a development project, and they did participate as much as their husbands would allow them to. For the past ten years Peace Corps' Women in Development (WID) unit by law must see that Peace Corps programming addresses the roles women play in the communities where Volunteers work. There has been a big push to see that this is done since the 1985 UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi. In FY86 (Fiscal Year 1986) Peace Corps' WID unit sponsored an awareness building campaign which included symposia to focus renewed attention within Peace Corps on the importance of working with women and to discuss specific strategies for working with women in all Peace Corps sectors. In FY87 the WID unit will focus on assisting countries in integrating a focus on women's roles into all programing, on offering workshops for Volunteers and their counterparts', and on collaboration with the Agency for International Development (AID).

("Profile of Women in Development," 1986) While very little information is available in the literature on WID, the information corresponds with what I was told by Pat who served in Cameroon in 1983 in Community Development doing women's activities. She attended workshops and conducted workshops for her counterparts, but she could not start a new program or activity without the approval of the men of the community.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Preparing Questions

After reading as much of the literature on the Peace Corps as possible, I formulated a list of question to ask the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. The books, written by former staff or Volunteers or with the full cooperation of the Peace Corps, generally praised the Peace Corps and minimized the problems, unless overcoming them made them seem exciting. I wanted to know if the books told the truth about the Peace Corps; I had specific questions to ask about the equality of treatment and training in the Peace Corps. I also had general questions to ask in order to get the women to talk about the experience as a whole. In fact, the questions covered the whole Peace Corps experience from joining to settling back into civilian life. I asked the same questions of everyone, and the questions followed the natural sequence of time. When I had the Volunteers tell me about their actual service, I sometimes received answers to questions before I asked them; at other times, comments by the Volunteers would give me an opportunity to ask probing questions. An example of this was Kebe's comment about Volunteers receiving "loving letters" from Liberian men. This led to a discussion 'of Peace Corps' policy toward relationships between Liberians and Peace Corps Volunteers, and if the policy was the same for male and female Volunteers. It was.

## Selecting Volunteers

Selecting the women to be interviewed presented first the problem of identifying ten women Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. I was faced with the problem of accessibility or lack of it. Richardson, Dohrenwend, and Kline (1965: 125) wrote: "The population must be reachable by the interviewer, available for interviewing, and willing to participate in the study." Returned Volunteers do not boast of their service in the Peace Corps; it is more as if they take a quiet pride in their accomplishments and in sharing their experiences with close friends and family. A three day advertisement in the Personals in The Flint Journal yielded one Volunteer. Kebe was home on leave from mission work in Africa when her mother asked her to answer the ad. Leads from three different people who knew of my project led to three more Volunteers. The Peace Corps' office in Detroit gave me two names of Volunteers living in Flint and sent me a list of names of Volunteers--male and female--for the surrounding area from which another two names were obtained. When a Detroit based recruiter came to the campus to recruit, she became my ninth subject. The director of the Peace Corps office in Ann Arbor sent a list of names of Volunteers living in Ann Arbor, and a woman on that list agreed to be my last subject. Once I had located the Returned Volunteers, they readily agreed to talk about their experiences and answered my questions freely.

One problem seems to be that the Returned Volunteers

do not routinely keep in touch with the Peace Corps. One other thing may be the fact that the Peace Corps can not release the names and addresses of Volunteers unless they have signed a release form. The five year limitation of service for staff has led to some lapses in the record keeping. In fact, according to Milton Viorst, the editor of Making a Difference: The Peace Corps at Twenty-Five, (1986:218) "There were a few obstacles, however, not the least of which was that over the years, a very substantial portion of the Peace Corps' records has vanished." This presents an even bigger problem for researchers.

#### Interviewing Techniques

For the most part the interviews were conducted in an easy and relaxed atmosphere in homes, offices, classrooms, and the public library. When I contacted the women to request an interview, I told each woman the purpose of the interview and how I had obtained her name. I said I was interested in the whole experience of the Peace Corps, and I wanted to know if there was true equality in the Peace Corps. During the interviews, I would comment on something I had read or something another Volunteer had related about her experience in order to draw out a fuller response from the Volunteer. When I had asked all of my questions, I would ask if they wished to add anything that had not been covered. They all said that I could contact them if I had further questions. I expressed my appreciation for their help when the interview was over.

## THE VOLUNTEERS

Anne -- Brazil, 1964-66

Anne was twenty-one years old, ready to graduate from college, and did not know what she wanted to do. She had been helping the Peace Corps recruiters on campus and wound up recruiting herself. She was put in the Food for Peace program which involved setting up school lunch programs in the poorer areas of Brazil. In 1964 Brazilian men were not accustomed to women who worked or to women with authority, which made her stay there somewhat difficult. In spite of her experience in dealing with the culture of Brazil, she believed in the Peace Corps and became a recruiter three days after she returned to the United States. She decided that NOW was not for her--"My consciousness was raised at birth"--even though she experienced job discrimination because of gender in the early 70s. She is a free lance writer and a teacher who teaches privately adult writers who want to publish. She also teaches writing at a prestigious university.

Faye -- Liberia, 1965-67

Faye graduated from college, married, and joined the Peace Corps in 1965. She taught local elementary students at a church-supported Episcopal mission in Liberia while her husband taught high school students at the boarding school. Faye started a school library, arranged a breakfast program using food from CARE, and taught art and typing after her regular classes. Faye's evaluation: "It



was probably one of the highlights of my life." Faye taught school while her husband went to graduate school. She taught nursery school and adult high school while her two sons were growing up. She worked on developing and setting up a school for high school dropouts. In 1983 she helped develop the Children's Museum and worked as the Director of Programs until recently. She plans to go to graduate school this Fall.

Joan - Philippines, 1965-67

Joan and her husband had been out of college for a couple of years when they answered the call of the Peace Corps. Joan was a TESL teacher, but her primary job in the Philippines was to train teachers in how to teach English as a second language. During her second year in the Peace Corps she spent part of her time traveling with the doctor to the barrios giving shots. She and her husband were involved in running a summer day camp and in working on a project digging pits and building flush toilets. When they returned to the States, she taught school while her husband returned to college. Today she is teaching school, but in the meantime, she has obtained a Masters degree and has completed the intern program in administration. She is working on becoming a reading specialist, an important area in the future of education in Michigan.

Melba - Kenya, 1969-71

Melba wanted to do something that would also fulfill the dreams that her mother and her grandmother had had of

service and of independence. She graduated from Shaw University and took part in the first cooperative training program Shaw had with the Peace Corps to send Volunteers to Kenya. Melba asked for a transfer from her first school in Kenya and was moved to a new school that was being set up for disabled young people. In college she was a psychology major, but there she taught English, history, and mathematics. She was also involved in an arts and crafts program for disabled Africans operated by Volunteers. This involvement helped her decide to go into rehab counseling when she returned. Upon return to the States she obtained a Masters degree in Social Work. She now works for the Michigan Department of Education in rehabilitation services. Melba thinks service in the Peace Corps is a maturing experience.

Kebe -- Liberia, 1973-1977

Kebe taught school for four and one-half years before joining the Peace Corps, something she had always wanted to do. She was sent to Liberia where she taught French for two years at a government high school. She signed on for two more years with the Peace Corps at the same school. The next six years were spent in the same village teaching under private contract with the Ministry of Education and working at the Lutheran Hospital. She came home in 1983 for a period of study at the School for International Training in Vermont and returned to Monrovia, Liberia, as Assistant to the Liberian Bishop of the Lutheran Church.

She came home on leave in 1987 and stayed long enough to have some surgery. She has returned to Monrovia for two more years of administrative work with the Lutheran Bishop. She is not sure what the future holds, but she hopes it included Africa. She said she has had such good, positive experiences with the Liberians, both as a Volunteer and as a civilian. She says she is where it was meant for her to be; the Peace Corps has more than lived up to her expectations.

Ruth -- Sierra Leone, 1974-77

When Ruth graduated from college, teaching jobs were not easy to find, so she saw the Peace Corps as an opportunity to acquire experience, as a way to help someone less fortunate, and as a way to travel. For four days a week Ruth taught fifth grade mathematics, and on the fifth day she and two other Volunteers rode their motorcycles to distant schools conducting workshops in teaching methods for local mathematics, English, and science teachers. All three Volunteers signed on for an extra year in order to train local teachers to take their places with the workshops. When she came home, she worked at various temporary jobs, including working for CETA. Now she divides her time between her job of traveling for the United Church Directories of Ohio and her life on her husband's farm.

Diana - Tonga, 1976-78

Diana called herself "sort of a typical kid of the 60s, rebellious, sort of rejecting what her parents stood for." Upon graduating from college, she moved to California and worked as a newspaper reporter for five years. Deciding that she wanted to do something interesting and challenging, Diana quit her job and joined the Peace Corps. She was sent to the Kingdom of Tonga where she served two years as Public Relations Adviser to the Ministry of Labor, Commerce, and Industries, plus three months training her replacement. The job of adviser was entirely her creation, and she was pleased with what she had accomplished. She lived in a communal style in the middle of a Tongan family, and she was pleased with what happened to her there, too. She said she sort of grew up in those two years and came to terms with life. When she returned, she went back to college for a degree in social work and worked for seven years for a social service agency. Last December she became Coordinator for the Re-Entry Center of the Academic Advising Center.

Mary - Ecuador, 1976-78

Mary was the first one in her family to graduate from college, so her family was not too surprised when she was also the first one to join the Peace Corps. She went to Ecuador and studied Spanish so she could work in Community Development on a program called Betterment of the Home and

and the Community. According to Mary there was this wonderful big name but no program. Convinced that the Ecuadorian program director did not care if she worked or not, Mary found her own community that welcomed her and her help. She taught cooking, sewing, nutrition, and health. She translated the English on the medical supplies into Spanish and taught an English class for girls preparing for high school. Even though her house was broken into, she thought this was a great community of right thinking people. When she returned home, she bought a used car and traveled through the Eastern part of the United States. When she started looking for work, the interviewer at the Employment Office explained what non-competitive eligibility meant and urged her to seek Federal employment. She started working for the Social Security Administration and has been there every since. She thinks that she might like to change her job some day; that some day will come when her two daughters are older.

Sally - Senegal, 1978-1981

Sally gave up science and a spot in an engineering school for French and a teaching certificate. She thought Peace Corps would give her the opportunity to gain teaching experience while perfecting her French. She went to Senegal, a French-speaking country, where she learned to teach English using the CLAD method. She taught in the largest high school in West Africa for two years. During

vacations from school, she trained other Volunteer teachers in the Clad method. She extended her Peace Corps time for three months in order to be a teacher trainer, again. One of those Volunteers was the young man, Mark, who later became her husband. She returned home for six months but went back to Senegal to take charge of the training of the last group of Volunteers to go through the CLAD training. She taught for a year under private contract at a school thirty miles from the school where her fiance was serving his second year for Peace Corps. Sally and Mark lived in Hawaii before coming to Michigan where Sally works for Berman Marshall, a marketing company, while Mark goes to graduate school.

Pat -- Cameroon, 1983-1985

Pat did not seriously consider the Peace Corps in 1973 when she heard a recruiter on campus because she was married. By 1982 she was divorced and her service project for Mental Health was coming to a close; then she remembered the Peace Corps and thought that joining would give her a chance to get involved in a type of service work again. She started her training in Zaire before going to Cameroon for the technical training and the cultural training specific to Cameroon. She encountered no big problems in Cameroon even though she wore jeans and rode a motorcycle. She said she found people to be reasonable. When she returned to the States, she did temporary work while she

sought permanent work with Oakland County or with federal agencies. When she heard of an opening at the Peace Corps office in Detroit, she applied and and was hired. She has been a Peace Corps recruiter for the last two and one-half years. Her future plans include going to Wayne State University on a parttime basis for a Masters in Business.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTING FINDINGS

#### Reasons for Joining

Since the Peace Corps' appeal is universal, there is no such thing as a typical Volunteer. The women I interviewed shared one characteristic; they were all college graduates. Six joined right out of college; the others had worked for various periods of time before joining. Two had served with their husbands, one was a divorcee, and the others were single. Some of the women had served as teachers, some had worked in Community Development, and one had worked in Public Administration. One of the questions most frequently asked of the Volunteers is why they joined the Peace Corps (Rice, 1985) and that is the question I started the interviews with. There were no simple, one reason answers because their motives were mixed, but they all saw Peace Corps service as a chance to help people.

Mary, who served in Ecuador in 1976-78, had an answer to the question that was like a revelation or a religious experience. During a college course, she became aware of the ability she had to work with people and to persuade people to her point of view. After a particularly effective speech in which she had changed the whole class to her point of view, she knew something special was going on. "It really made me think that even though I am only one small person, I am going to have to do something that



is going to affect the world. I am going to have to make my life worth living." In between that class and the final examination, she spent an evening at a Christmas party where she talked to two Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who were the campus recruiters. She thought Peace Corps "is what I want to do." The question on the final exam was: What do you plan to do; how are you going to make the world a different place to live? "I had my answer all cut out for me...very nice and neat...I felt that I had to be committed to that answer." After she graduated, she signed up with the Peace Corps, and a short time later she was on her way to a three day staging in Miami.

Joan's first knowledge of the Peace Corps came from her husband. Her husband worked for General Motors, and for some reason they had a recruiter there who came through the offices. He went to listen to the pitch, and he brought some information home. The more they talked about it the more they felt it was kind of exciting. They sent in their applications with another couple, but the other couple were not accepted because they were not college graduates. Joan and her husband were accepted and went to the Philippines in 1965. Joan said if the Peace Corps had not come to General Motors, they would not have joined. In 1964 the Peace Corps started sending recruiters and application forms to automotive workers in Michigan in the "hope of getting skilled mechanics for programs in Latin America." (Rice 1985:167) This effort recruited few

blue-collar workers and was soon discontinued, but the timing was right to reach them. There is a sort of mystical quality here. Joan said, "Except for his General Motors experience, we have both always been in service type jobs. I just think our disposition lends itself to that kind of job."

Sally's motives were both career related and service inspired. She was a French major in college who planned to teach. She said, "Before I actually taught the language, I wanted to live in a country where it was spoken, ...If I joined the Peace Corps and went to a French speaking country, which would be a Third World country... I would get the experience that I needed, and I would help people at the same time." Although she did not go into teaching when she returned to the States, she taught TESL for two years for the Peace Corps in Senegal.

Pat was at a point in her life where she needed something different, and she thought Peace Corps service would be beneficial careerwise. Her marriage had ended, and the service related projects she was working on in 1982 were almost finished. She remembered hearing about the Peace Corps when she was in college in 1973. Her field was Developmental Psychology, and cross-cultural experiences are so important in that area." She looks on her two years in Cameroon as both a chance to help people and a way to gain helpful career experience.

Some of the Volunteers were interested in having a

broadening experience and in developing or growing as an individual. That was what motivated Diana. She had been a newspaper reporter in California for five years when she decided something was missing from her life. "In Southern California the people I was interviewing were very interesting people who had done very dramatic things. Invariably I felt I wanted to do the same. I was ready for the next challenge." Had the Peace Corps not accepted her, she planned to return to college. She was accepted and went to the Kingdom of Tonga in 1976.

Her Liberian name means "one who gives" and "bright one." Kebe Willeeyah taught school for five years before joining the Peace Corps in 1973. She said, "During my college years and during my teaching years here in Flint, I always had the desire to join the Peace Corps. To me it sounded adventurous, exciting, as well as being able to share, to give, and to help other people." At this point in her life she decided she would either go back to school or join the Peace Corps and follow her dream. The Peace Corps dream led her to Liberia.

Faye was very much influenced by her fiancé who wanted them to join the Peace Corps as a couple. He had looked into joining the Peace Corps and talked with her about it. She said, "I decided this would be a wonderful experience for us to share, and it was." They went to Liberia as teachers in 1965.

Anne said, "I was twenty-one years old and coming out

of college without the foggiest notion of what I was going to be doing, but I knew I did not want the business world." When the Peace Corps recruiter came to her campus, she helped him recruit and ended up recruiting herself. She said, "I suppose there was a sense of altruism, but mainly the Peace Corps told me I could do something, and this was new to me because I didn't feel confident that I could do anything." When the Peace Corps said that she would be trained to do something, she joined and was sent to Brazil in 1964.

Ruth had several reasons for joining Peace Corps. Typically her first reason was a chance to make a contribution to the world. Her reasoning was, "I thought this would be a chance to pay back, so to speak, some of the benefits that I had had." Another reason she gave was that the job market was not so good for elementary teachers and this would give her some experience. A third reason was that it would give her a chance to travel and really know people in other countries. She told the Peace Corps she would accept any place except South America so she was sent to Sierre Leone in 1974.

Melba had several reasons for joining the Peace Corps. When she graduated in 1969 from Shaw University, there were not that many job opportunities for Psychology majors. She said, "I saw the Peace Corps as an excellent opportunity to gain some work experience, and also tap into that educational program." Shaw was one of the colleges that

for a time cooperated with the Peace Corps by offering educational credit and job placement services as incentives to minorities for recruiting purposes. Another reason was to fulfill the dream for her grandmother who had always wanted to do missionary work in Africa and for her mother who had wanted to join the WAVES or the WACS when she was young. She thought her "Peace Corps endeavors were like living their lives for them." The fact that the church she had grown up in was heavily involved in sending money to the African countries made everything just sort of fall in place. She went to Kenya in 1969.

## Training

No two training programs were the same, partly because the training programs were and are still tailored "to match the geography, the system of government, and the social and economic needs of the host nation." (Carey, 1970:61) Then too, training changed according to the philosophy of the current Peace Corps Director. In an early planning meeting of the Peace Corps staff, the economist John Kenneth Galbraith advised supplying teachers to meet the education needs of Africa and Asia and people for general community services for the more literate Latin American countries. "This analysis of the potential demand for Volunteers fitted perfectly with Shriver's sense of what the Peace Corps would be able to supply...[Also]...a focus on human resources development through teaching and community organization would allow the Peace Corps to meet...its three objectives." (Rice, 1985:172-73)

During the early years the the Peace Corps relied on private organizations and institutions like The Experiment in International Living in Vermont to conduct training programs. (Carey, 1970:95) That is where Anne trained in 1964. She started out in Community Development in the First Health Training Project for the Peace Corps. She said, "It was the early days, and no one was quite sure what they were doing." Her group studied conversational Portuguese six hours a day for three months. The rest of the training was mostly classroom lectures on how to

deliver babies and how to give shots. They observed deliveries in a Boston hospital and visited a convalescent home. Amme said her training project was to do a survey in a wealthy community that was designed to encourage parents to get immunization shots for their children. She thought the training was inadequate and not very well thought out. At the last minute twelve Volunteers, including Anne, were pulled out of the Health Training Project and put in the Food for Peace Project which involved setting up school lunch programs. As she said, "Training was irrelevant."

Both Faye and Joan took their training in California in 1965. Faye had teacher training methods and survival training in the mountains but no language training at the San Francisco site because she would be teaching in English in Liberia. She said she could have used some lessons in the spoken language which was pidgen English. During training the group went through psychological counseling and evaluation, written tests, and interviews. Her opinion was, "I think they tried to find out how flexible you would be." Her group had no incountry training. Joan trained in Sacramento for ten weeks. She had ten hour days with language training in Tagalog, one of the many dialects spoken in the Philippines. The group had classes in Filipino culture and late night sessions of just sitting around and talking with the Filipino teachers. Her group met with a psychologist once a week, did tests that seemed

to focus on their feelings about their parents, and drew pictures which were always unfavorably interpreted. Upon arriving in the Philippines, they stayed with a volunteer host family for a week before going on to their assignment.

In 1969 Melba filled out an application but did not have to take the entrance test to be accepted by the Peace Corps to serve in Kenya. She trained at South Fort, an old naval fort in North Carolina. She went through an intensive language training program called HILT, high intensity language training, a refinement of the LST or language saturation technique put in use by the Peace Corps in 1967. After the first week, she spoke nothing but Swahili for three months. According to Philip C. Carey (1970:93) "Trainees can achieve a language proficiency in twelve weeks equal to that of language majors after four years of college study." The group also had training in geography and the culture of Kenya as well as a chance to get accustomed to native food. There was no survival training, but the group had regular physical exercise to keep the body active and to release tension. Melba said there was a lot of tension among the trainees as every action was observed and evaluated. Quite a few trainees were deselected for "not having the proper attitude," whatever that means, and it could mean anything.

By the end of 1967 there was a change in philosophy, and "total incountry training was being conducted in an increasing number of host countries." (Carey, 1970:96)



Kebe had a two or three day staging in Philadelphia before leaving for Liberia. The staging gives potential Volunteers a chance to change their minds before traveling to their country. Her group had five days of adjustment in Monrovia and went on a long weekend home stay with Liberian host families. Kebe said they lost some Volunteers to culture shock. Then they were divided into groups and sent to training sites near their assignments where they went through teacher training and conducted vacation schools for students like our summer schools. Her major in college was French, and that was what she taught in Liberia during her Peace Corps service.

Like Kebe, Ruth had a three day staging in Philadelphia. She said they were given knowledge of the country and the living conditions they would be subject to. She had a month of training at an upcountry college campus in Sierre Leone. Part of the training was to get the Volunteers adjusted to the African food, which was hot and spicy. The other part of the training was to introduce them to the customs of the country through working with a local teacher. Ruth, who was left-handed, said, "I learned that I could not hand anything or accept anything with my left hand. That was totally unacceptable in this mostly Moslem country." Her group had some training in the different tribal languages, but Ruth and her roommate learned "Krio," the common language of the country, because they wanted to be able to communicate with all of the

Sierra Leoneans.

In 1976 both Diana and Mary went through stagings and orientations in the United States before doing the language learning and training in the host countries. Diana had a mostly cultural orientation in San Francisco with just an introduction to the Tongan language, followed by two days in Western Samoa, before arriving in Tonga. There the group was housed together for three months where they underwent intensive language training in small groups. The other training was mostly cultural, and there was not a physical regimen or exercise. Mary had a three day staging in Miami where she learned a little Spanish and talked with Volunteers who had served in Ecuador. In Ecuador Mary stayed with a host family who had a three-story, five bedroom apartment, and no children. This was not a good introduction to a typical Ecuadorian family. Training consisted of seven or eight hours of Spanish classes a day. Two weeks into training Mary had to return home because of a family emergency. When she returned she worked with two Spanish tutors in order to reach the level of fluency of the other Volunteers. At the end of training, she was told to check with the Ecuadorian program manager to learn what her own project was. There was no project awaiting her.

Sally had five days of staging in Philadelphia before going to Senegal to teach English. They trained at a high school incountry for ten weeks. Her group spent half of the day learning the CLAD method of teaching English and

half of the day learning French. Since Sally was proficient in French, she concentrated on learning Wolof, a native language, taught to her by the CLAD method. The Volunteers did demonstrations in front of different classes of students and then did team teaching in actual classes. There were cultural outings and weekend home visits with local teachers. Volunteers had the opportunity to visit the sites before actually locating there.

Pat worked with women in a Community Development program in Cameroon in 1983. Her first training site was in Zaire where she studied French for six days a week for six or seven weeks. She received one afternoon a week to go into the local town to explore the culture. Then she went to Cameroon for technical training and cultural training specific to the job and to Cameroon. She was replacing a younger woman who had had trouble coping with the community so the program was already in place, but Pat had the authority, within limits, and the training to make needed changes and bring the program up to date. The Peace Corps had considered closing the program, but Pat had convinced them that she could handle the program.

All of the Volunteers agreed that there was equal treatment of Volunteers during training. This was true in the rigorous survival training as well as in the intensive language training. Anne said her group was told if any couples were formed during training, the woman would be sent home. She said couples did form, but nothing was done.

## Actual Service

In one of the Peace Corps' first staff meetings John Kenneth Galbraith suggested that the Peace Corps meet the needs of Third World countries in Africa and Asia by providing teachers for math, science, and languages, and in Latin America by providing volunteers for community development. This fitted in with Shriver's idea of what "thousands of motivated young liberal arts graduates" (Rice, 1985:172) could be trained to do. The Peace Corps is still following this suggestion, although there are other categories such as Agriculture, Health Care, and Public Administration.

Since mass education and modernization were considered essential for the survival of the African nations, the early programs there were concentrated in education. Five of the women I interviewed taught in Africa, and one taught in the Philippines. This corresponds with Robert G. Carey's (1970:115) findings that nearly half of all Volunteers have been teachers and/or teacher trainers. The Peace Corps prepares most of these Volunteers for teaching, but two of the women interviewees had worked as teachers, and three were teacher-trained in college. In the host country some of the women taught in private schools while others taught in government-run schools. Most teacher Volunteers were not pleased with the European style system of education they encountered; there were inadequate texts, overcrowded facilities, and strict discipline which

included caning, but they did teach in an established school, and the structure was already in place. Thus, the Volunteers pretty well knew what was expected of them and the structured nature of their assignments gave them a sense of accomplishment. Some of the Peace Corps staff had doubts about what the young graduates could accomplish as teachers, but they hoped the Volunteers would use "dedication, interest, and imagination" to make up for lack of teaching experience. (Ashabranner, 1971:60)

Kebe taught high school French for two years in Liberia, West Africa, for the Peace Corps; she had such a satisfying experience that she signed up for two more years of teaching at the same school. After leaving the Peace Corps, she continued to teach under a private Ministry of Education contract for four years. In addition, she started doing office work for the Lutheran Mission Hospital on a part time basis and then worked there on a full time basis for two years. She lived in "my village" of Zor Zor for a total of ten years before moving into religious work in Monrovia. This is not the usual Peace Corps experience, although Volunteers do extend their service sometimes, particularly in cases where they want to see the end of their project or make sure people are trained to continue their work, but Kebe fell in love with Africa. She said the students were typical students, but she did not encounter any gross insubordination because the students see education as a way to improve themselves.

Her accomodations were primitive but not unbearable. Her house had five rooms with concrete floors and a tin roof, but there was no electricity or indoor plumbing. As there are not enough schools in the country, girls were not often encouraged to attend high school, which is usually a boarding school arrangement. Kebe said she acquired a Liberian family of many daughters because she allowed some of the female students to live with her in order to be able to afford to go to school. During school vacations she became involved with the hospital mobile unit and traveled through the bush with the medical team giving shots and inoculations. There were no other Peace Corps Volunteers in her school while she was teaching for Peace Corps, but through the years there were from one to five Volunteers working on other programs in the Village. She enjoyed a good relationship with the other Volunteers and opened her home to Volunteers traveling through the area on leave. She helped start a Volunteer support group there.

Faye and her husband taught at an Episcopalian mission school in Liberia in 1965. She taught local children at the elementary school. Her principal and fellow teachers were Liberian, but she lived with the missionaries in a bungalow with electricity, cold running water, and indoor plumbing. Faye had several outside projects; she taught art and typing after her regular classes, and she found time to start a school library and a school breakfast program. They socialized with the missionaries and the

Peace Corps couple who taught at the high school plus any Volunteers passing through their area. The mission high school was a boarding school, and they hired some of the boys to work for them. This was almost a necessity because teachers are supposed to live a certain way, and it also gave the students a way to earn money to help pay for their schooling.

Melba, who served in Kenya in 1969, asked the Ministry of Education for a different school because she could not handle her all girl school being across the compound from a bar. She said the students had to walk by the bar on their way to and from home. She was moved to a new school that had just been started for the disabled or maimed population in the beautiful foothills of the Aberdares Mountains. She and the headmistress shared a house during the first year; she was given a five-room house of her own during her second year. She eventually gave in to pressure to hire a maid because it was expected of teachers to live a certain way and it gave a local person a chance to work. The school was the equivalent to our high school, and she taught English, history, and math. Some of the students were as old as she, but there were no discipline problems because the students took schooling seriously. She worked with some Swedish Volunteers who set up an arts and crafts project and a store. She said this experience helped her decide to go into "rehab counseling" when she returned home. With the exception of a Volunteer in Agriculture

in her area, she only saw her Volunteer friends on vacations or holidays. However, there were frequently visits from Volunteers traveling on leave as well as Volunteers from other countries. She traveled during the first school vacation, but during the second one she and two other Volunteers worked for the Ministry of Health and traveled to the Northern part of the country where they gave smallpox shots to the local people. She said that "experience was a trip in itself."

The schools in Sierra Leone are directed by the Ministry of Education but are financed by Christian or Moslem churches. Ruth taught fifth grade math in a Catholic school during her first two years in the Peace Corps. During her third year she split her time between a Methodist school and a Moslem school. She taught classes four days a week, and on Fridays she and two other Volunteers did workshops at schools within a fifty mile radius, teaching the local teachers how to present new material in math, English, and science to the students. She said, "We tried to show them how to make the students want to learn instead of beating the knowledge into them." At first, Ruth and her roommate lived in a three-room apartment that had electricity, a well, and an outhouse. There was a Peace Corps couple who were in secondary education living there, too. The couple spent much of their time socializing with the British who were managing the diamond mines in that area. Ruth said she and her



roommate extended their service for a year in order to train local teachers to take over their workshop project. This time they lived in a small village in a house with no electricity. They shared an outside water spigot that served about twenty families with good, clean water. Ruth said they ran an "open house" by which she meant they literally kept their door open when they were home to show the local people they were welcome to visit. They paid a neighbor woman to cook their supper for them when she cooked for her family, and they paid students from the high school to do their laundry. Ruth said it was expected of them as teachers, and it gave students a chance to earn money for school.

Sally was an English teacher in TESL for two years in Senegal. She taught at the largest high school in West Africa, a school with approximately 5,000 students. There were Germans, Russians, and Frenchmen teaching there as well as Peace Corps Volunteers. She told of a Russian who thought it ironic that he had more money than the Americans. He could take a taxi while the Americans took the public transportation or walked, "so he used to pick us up in the taxi all the time." During training the Volunteers had learned how to teach English using the CLAD method; however, they did have to have a proficiency in French, the official language. Sally said she used to get angry with the students and would start disciplining them in French and finish in English. The first time she was able to complete

the disciplining in French, the whole class applauded her. As a secondary project during school vacations, she worked as a teacher trainer, and when her two years was completed, she extended her service for three months and worked again as a teacher trainer. The first year she lived in a duplex which was part of government housing for teachers. During her second year she lived in an apartment in a building where some of the Russian Volunteers lived. She had difficulty managing her money in the beginning. Later on she paid a Home Economics teacher to cook for her and lived very well on her living allowance. She met her future husband, Mark, when she was training Volunteer teachers. She came home for six months and returned to Senegal to be head teacher trainer for the last group of Peace Corps Volunteers in TESL. She decided to teach under private contract while Mark finished his last year of Peace Corps service. Sally said she thought male Volunteers had a more difficult time than female Volunteers in Senegal. Most were not as adept at taking care of their laundry or preparing their meals, they had very little contact with Sengalese family life, and they were not allowed to date the Senegalese girls. Sally said she had a few female friends who shared their family life with her, and she was able to live alone, date whomever she pleased, and travel throughout West Africa by herself.

All of these Volunteers had good, though different, teaching experiences. In the small villages the living

conditions were somewhat primitive, but adequate, and they certainly lived better than most of the local people. They were seen as having done a good job and were treated with respect. They all finished their Peace Corps commitment with a sense of accomplishment.

Joan and her husband were involved in teaching in the Philippines. She taught English as a Second Language in an elementary school. At first she was assigned to work with another teacher, and she did demonstration teaching. Then she started teaching the local teachers how to teach English. The second year she taught TESL during the mornings and spent the afternoons traveling with the community doctor into the barrios to give immunization shots. The first summer they ran a day camp with four other Volunteers and put on a full scale musical production of Peter Rabbit. The second summer they took a survey of their village and made a large map of the area. Her husband learned how to build concrete toilets. With the villagers help they made quite a few of these outdoor toilets. The people seemed so happy and thanked them profusely. Then probable a year after they got home they received letters from the villagers thanking them for "building our pits; they make such nice storage for rice." Joan found the Filipino people a curious mixture of rudeness and politeness. The people did not want to hurt the feelings of the Volunteers by telling them they would not use the toilets as toilets. On the other hand, Joan

said she had difficulty getting the local teachers' attention while she was showing them how to teach English. The women sat and gossiped throughout her lectures. Finally, she simply walked out in the middle of the class and left them sitting there. A very upset principal invited her back, and the contrite teachers gave her their full attention. She said you had to earn their respect. The first year she and her husband traveled around the island during their leave; the second year they settled in and became more a part of the neighborhood. Her husband built a pingpong table and taught the children how to play, but they really became popular when they bought a small black and white television set which they shared. Noting how they fitted themselves into the community, Joan said, "We had to; we really did, because they were so distrustful at first." By the time it was time to leave they were feeling almost comfortable there, almost but not quite. Joan said that she never did fully understand the Filipino people, but they had a chance to learn about each other, and that is what the Peace Corps is all about.

The other major activity of the Peace Corps was Community Development. Anne said this meant "go into a community, get accepted, find out what people want, and help them get it." No great skill was needed because any action "which helped 'better' the lives of the local community" was Community Development. (Rice, 1985:184) For Anne this presented some problems. She trained in the

first Health Training project that the Peace Corps did. Shortly before the training period was over, she was transferred to the Food for Peace program, a school lunch project in Brazil that was being pushed **after** a successful small-scale first year. Arrangements had been made for Anne to live with the Mayor of the village and his wife and for her to work with a male Volunteer. Since she was working in the slums and barrios, this was seen as a way of protecting her, but it worked to her disadvantage because the Brazilians found it difficult to accept a woman working with a man or a woman with any authority. Brazil allowed the Peace Corps to start a project in Northern Brazil, and Anne moved there with the new project director and his family. She chose to live in a convent which housed female college students because she would have more freedom than with a private family. It also gave her a chance to meet and make friends with some Brazilian college students; Anne counts as one of her successes helping the students realize that all Americans are not bad. Another success was teaching English to a student who wanted to do graduate work in the United States and return to work to improve her country. A Volunteers' effort that Anne was very proud of happened during a polio epidemic. The Volunteers obtained polio vaccine from the United States and spread out over the whole area and distributed the vaccine to all of the children there. Anne felt that she and the Peace Corps had made a contribution.

Mary's experience in Community Development started out badly but improved. She was told "Betterment of the Home and the Community" is your project here in Ecuador; you decide with your Ecuadorian program manager what you are going to do, and then go do it. Unfortunately, the program never materialized, so Mary designed her own. She found a village where the people welcomed her help and were willing to work with her. She taught English to a group of girls whose parents thought this would improve the girls' chances of getting into high school. She taught sewing, cooking, canning and preserving foods, did some translating of English into Spanish, gave some health lectures, taught nutrition, worked with the doctor in the health clinic, and taught the women something they really wanted to know, how to knit wool socks. She also taught the villagers, by example, how to plant a garden and how to make an outdoor shower. The villagers were upset when someone broke into her house and stole a lot of her possessions. They suspected the landlord's son and insisted that she move in with a family so she would be safe. She felt that the people of the village cared for her and appreciated her efforts to work with them. While there were no other Volunteers in her village, she saw other Volunteers on leaves and vacations and had good relations with the Peace Corps staff.

Pat did some of her technical training in Cameroon before she started working for the Community Development

program. She was the only Volunteer living in a town of 5,000 people, but there were some German Volunteers as well as some French and Belgian workers there. She lived in a comfortable house with running water and electricity. She had a motorcycle for transportation as she had to travel to various villages doing extension work. There was a Community Development office in her village, and she did inservice training on how to do presentations, how to work with women's groups doing women's activities. She taught a lot of crafts: sewing, knitting, crocheting, tie-dyeing, and cooking. Training the assistants to organize activity groups and working with people on women's activities were her main duties. She got to know some of the families; one family, in particular, became special as she helped take care of the children when the mother was ill. She still has contact with that family.

Here again these three Volunteers had very different experiences; yet each felt that the experience was mutually beneficial. As Mary said, "In order to know a Third World country, you have to experience a Third World country. It is something I will never forget."

Diana went to Tonga to be a Public Relations Adviser to the Ministry of Labor, Commerce, and Industries. This, too, was a job in name only as no arrangements other than a place for her to live had been made. Diana learned the job by doing it. Her journalism skills helped her here as she wrote a lot of press releases, and she did a lot of

marketing in nearby countries for Tongan products. She did liaison for people like AID officials who came to meet Tongan entrepreneurs, making their arrangements for their stay, smoothing their way culturally, putting them in touch with the right people, and doing follow-up work. She worked with an Australian AID official on educating the Tongan people when the country went metric. As a favor to her landlord she worked with some of his relatives in producing and marketing their lime juice. There were thirty-some Volunteers in Diana's group on the island, but the relationships among them were shaky. They depended on each other, and yet there was tension there. Diana said as a consequence of this tension, the Volunteers became more involved in the Tongan community. After the training, Diana lived in the Tongan style in an oval house on the back part of her landlord's family home. She spoke Tongan, dressed Tongan, ate Tongan food, and felt very comfortable living in the middle of this communal family. Her house had electricity, cold running water, and indoor plumbing. She extended her stay for three months in order to train her replacement. She knew that she had done excellent work and wanted to see the job continue successfully.



## Unexpected Problems

When the Volunteers were asked if they had encountered any unexpected problems during their service, three of them said they had not. Pat amended her answer to say there were no problems that she could not handle. She said she found people to be pretty reasonable. She met negative comments with positive responses, and that usually led to discussions and conversations instead of arguments and hostility. "I did not harass people, and I did not make myself harassable either," she said. Joan answered, "Not really," to the question and then said that the Peace Corps training had not explained some facets of Filipino culture. She and her husband were stationed in a small village and were not prepared for how long it took to be accepted by the Filipinos. She did not understand why "they always felt a need for you to prove yourself, to prove that you liked them, or that their culture was OK in your eyes." Melba's answer was "none that I can remember because I was not even anticipating problems." However, in telling about her service in Kenya, she said that she asked for a different assignment when she discovered that her first school, an all girls school, was located very close to a bar. She was not able to adjust to that situation.

Their health was more of a concern for the Volunteers than they had anticipated. Right from the beginning, Sargent Shriver had tried to address that problem by having a Peace Corps doctor in every country the Peace Corps

served. This became more difficult to arrange in 1968 when "Congress amended the selective service laws so military obligations could not be met through Peace Corps service..." (Carey 1970:187) Then some areas had to be served by nurses or doctor's assistants. The Volunteers were given health lectures and medical kits to take with them, but conditions in Third World countries were frequently different from what they expected. Ruth said she had not anticipated becoming very ill with dysentery three months after arriving because what health problems the Volunteers might encounter were not discussed during staging or during training. She was upset by the primitive conditions at the local hospital, which had separate facilities for white and for black patients, although the white section was clean and bug-free. She was unhappy with the poor communication with her village and the Peace Corps office in the capital because she was in the local hospital for six days before anyone on the staff knew it. Faye said one of the problems that you had to be careful of was health. She and her husband boiled their water and took the medicine to prevent malaria, but her husband became so ill with malaria that he had to be flown to the hospital in Monrovia for treatment. She said there were a lot of air borne diseases and bacteria to guard against. For her insect bites would become infected and turn into ulcers.

Mary was really upset with the health problems in Ecuador. She said the country was beautiful to drive through, but "it was dirty, and you could get very sick."

She said that even though during incountry orientation the Volunteers were advised "on what to do and what not to do," she and another Volunteer became ill from drinking raw milk given to them by an Ecuadorian nurse, and a male Volunteer got a tapeworm from eating pork that was cooked and sold by a street vendor. Mary had declined an assignment in Thailand, and she said she might have turned down Ecuador if she had known how dirty it was. Anne said she had not expected to be ill, but she had para-typhoid which she thought was caused by food served to the students at the convent. She was four hundred miles away from the Peace Corps doctor, whom she was too ill to call anyway, so she was treated by a Brazilian medical student like the rest of the ill students. The Peace Corps program director stopped by to see her, immediately loaded her into his station wagon, and took her to his home where his wife nursed her back to health. Ann said, "I am grateful for my healthy, American constitution." Diana commented on the danger of infection in the tropics. Her coral cut became blood poisoning which was treated by the Peace Corps doctor. Most of the Volunteers have horror stories of the medical care some of their fellow Volunteers received.

"Some early reports on the Peace Corps advised the omission of the 'weaker sex' because of the dangers of rape...especially in the 'machismo' cultures of Latin America." (Rice, 1985:127) Rape or attempted rape did occur in many of the Peace Corps countries. Sally listed

an attempted rape as a problem she certainly had not expected to encounter in Senegal in 1978. Sally lived alone, taught with local men teachers, got along well with American and foreign Volunteers and with Senegalese men, and casually dated. In fact, she had casually dated a Senegalese, a friend of an American Volunteer, who drank too much, broke into her apartment, and tried to attack her. This suggests that a certain amount of discretion must be observed because the belief that American women are promiscuous is prevalent. On the other hand, Diana, who listed an attempted rape as one of the times she felt fear, said there is "sort of a Tongan acceptance for a sort of raping of women who are unmarried and ridiculous enough to live alone." The man came into her house in the middle of the night through a bathroom window and made his escape through another window when she screamed, leaving behind his Tongan skirt. Anne's dislike of Brazilian men and their attitude toward women was reenforced by having to fight off a rape attempt by a man who knew she was with the Peace Corps and who had offered her a ride home. Anne said she was not really accepted because she worked with a male Volunteer and went into the slums and barrios to set up the lunch programs. In Brazil in 1964 few respectable women worked outside the home. Ruth did not know if her experience resulted from the Sierra Leone attitude toward American women or toward women in general. The principal of one of the schools in her area invited her

to go on a weekend visit to his parent's village. She was surprised when the man's wife did not travel with them and even more surprised when their luggage was put in the same room. She said it was difficult trying to diplomatically explain "that's not what I had in mind, and that's not not what is going to happen." She learned to ask if his wife would be there or if she could bring her roommate. She made sure that the new Volunteers understood that aspect of the culture.

A problem for some of the Volunteers in Community Development was that they had to create their own project. This situation is discussed in the literature, (Rice, 1985; Adams, 1964) but it is seen more as a way of helping volunteers to be creative and innovative in working directly with the people; it was the philosophy of participation. Mary's project was called Betterment of the Home and the Community, but there was no structure. She said they "made this wonderful big name for us,...but they had no such program." So Mary found her own village, and with the cooperation of the villagers planned how she should work with them. On the other hand, Diana, whose job title was Public Relations Adviser, found that she was expected to create the job from scratch by the Tongan government because this was a brand new job. She had to start by requisitioning supplies such as a typewriter, paper, and pens to write with.

A lack of classroom supplies was a problem for Kebe in

Liberia. She said she used her \$25 allowance for supplies from the Peace Corps to buy rolls of brown paper for exercises and lecture notes for the students. Another problem was the large class load which meant a lot of paperwork for her. Sally also said large classes were a problem in Senegal. This is a complaint that teachers everywhere make.

Faye said a problem for her was the high humidity. She said any physical work would cause you to perspire profusely and drain you of energy. Joan said a problem in the Philippines was the unbearable heat. Her husband kept their small electric fan operating constantly.

Diana said she met a lot of unexpected resistance from the women who worked in her office. Like Joan, she said she literally had to prove herself to them, although she did not constitute a threat to them in terms of employment. Diana also said there was a tension among the Volunteers that she could not explain. She said, "Maybe we had to rely on each other more than is healthy."

Like reasons for joining the Peace Corps, there were a number of unexpected problems encountered by the Volunteers. The big problem in Community development was having to plan your project. The literature admits that the Peace Corps was trying to push too many Volunteers into too many countries too fast; they were playing the numbers game and were not doing enough planning. But the literature does not say Volunteers' health was a problem.

The literature gives statistics to prove that that the Volunteers did not suffer more illnesses than did other Americans their age. (Carey, 1970) Rice (1985) wrote that women Volunteers were not given enough warning of the aggressive sexual attitudes of African and Latin American men, but he also wrote that American films gave the impression that American women are promiscuous as if that justified the men's action. Another problem is that in some countries, only a certain type of woman walked alone with a man or took active part with men in community life. Female Volunteers had to overcome these differences, do their job for the Peace Corps, and not offend these cultural sensitivities.

#### Unexpected Benefits

The Volunteers were asked if there were any benefits in Peace Corps service that they had not expected to find. Some of the Volunteers thought the opportunity to meet other Peace Corps Volunteers was a great benefit. Faye said the Peace Corps Volunteers were "wonderful people who shared out outlook on life and were very enthusiastic about what they were doing." Kebe said she enjoyed "close personal interaction" with Volunteers and helped with a Volunteer support group even after she had finished her service in the Peace Corps. Mary found a lot of support from the Peace Corps staff and Volunteers when she was thinking of returning early. She said, "I found that other

Peace Corps Volunteers were friends." Melba thought that meeting Volunteers from all over the world was better than she could have imagined. In fact, she was so impressed with the Swedish Volunteers who worked with her in establishing a program and a store for disabled Africans, she decided to go into rehabilitation counseling when she returned to the States.

Sally met her future husband, Mark, in the Peace Corps in Senegal. She had agreed to be the head trainer for the last group of Peace Corps teachers going through the CLAD training for teaching English, and Mark was one of the teacher trainers. She taught for a year in Senegal under private contract while Mark finished his Peace Corps service. Anne said she made her first adult female friend while serving in Brazil; she taught English to a college student who wanted to do her graduate work in the United States, and the friendship came about because of this association. Anne felt her service was worthwhile when she received a letter from an activist student which said: "If you are what America is all about, I can no longer hate Americans." Joan said, "After you have been there for a while, if you like it at all, you really start getting close to the people and you start caring." Kebe said she made lasting friends of some people in her village in Liberia. She said she had Liberian family.

Several of the Volunteers spoke of the overwhelming experience of Peace Corps service. Faye thought it was a



"very broadening experience, and I learned a lot about myself. I guess I did not expect that. I thought it would be an experience I could share with my husband." Mary said, "I felt that what I did there was worth my having been there, and I learned so much. You have to experience it, and I was given the opportunity to do that."

"I think a part of the major benefit is those two years just don't go away," was Joan's comment. "Even today we see something, and it brings back memories for both of us...It is such a special thing, even though much of the time you just hated it. I guess I can't explain it well. It was awful while you were there. Kind of like having a baby."

Diana said she was not prepared for the great personal change she underwent. The experience of living in the communal setting with the Tongan extended family helped her review or come to terms with her family. In Tonga she learned discretion and was able to relate to the Tongan idea of family and make peace with her Midwestern background.

Ruth said she had "a better appreciation of the system of American government," something she had taken for granted. While she was in Sierra Leone, she saw the results of a coup attempt, a "democratic" election that included violence and ballot box stuffing, and wholesale corruption and bribery in the Sierra Leonean government. She said you also get an idea of the difficulty America has

in making an impact on other countries.

Pat said she knew she would get to travel, to learn a language, and to know people; however, she was able to know people better than she had expected. She spent a lot of time with some of the families, and she still has contact with them. Rice (1985) said travel was one of the less important reasons listed for joining the Peace Corps; however, all of the Volunteers enjoyed the travel and the experiencing of the countries. Both Joan and Melba said the travel, especially the long trip home, was fabulous.

## Host Country's Opinion of Volunteers

Most of the Volunteers felt that they were well received both as Americans and as Peace Corps Volunteers in the host countries. That in itself is remarkable because in 1961 the Cold War was perceived as a great danger, and "the Third World was to be the main battleground." (Rice, 1985:256) Some critics saw the Peace Corps as just another foreign policy weapon with which to combat Communism, and according to Anne, lectures on Communism were part of her training in 1964. But Sargent Shriver, though recognizing its contribution to the Anti-Communist cause, "insisted that the Peace Corps should not be thought of, or used, as a means of achieving the short-range political aims of the United States." (Rice, 1985:257) They were nonpolitical.

For the most part Third World countrymen have liked these individual Americans and have been impressed by their idealism and ability. The exception may have been Anne, who suffered from a culture confrontation with the Brazilian men. She was not assertive enough to say, "I'm an American first, just doing my job, and a woman second," but even Anne had her small successes. The literature says that the Philippines were inundated with Peace Corps teachers, which may explain why it took almost a year for Joan and her husband to earn the trust and respect of the Filipinos. Joan said she did not understand why it took so long, but it was something they were willing to work on. Peace Corps teachers were particularly well thought of in

Africa. Sally said her principal told her that Volunteers were very competent, and Kebe said her students said Peace Corps teachers did a good job. Faye, who lived and taught at a mission school, said she "was accepted like the missionaries but welcomed as an American."

Most of the Volunteers thought they were doing the very best they could do and were happy with the completion of innumerable small projects or tasks. Mary said she "felt comfortable in her little community. The people liked me; they respected my education." Pat said she wore jeans and rode a motorcycle in Cameroon in 1983, but she told people she was an American first and a woman second. Allowances were made for her because the people do recognize that women from other countries are different. Pat said Peace Corps Volunteers were respected unless they did something to change that opinion.

Sally said the host country respected us because we made a conscious effort to fit in and become a part of their country. Ruth said we tried to assimilate into the African community. The people felt close to us and invited us to their special occasions. In case of problems such as a coup, our contingent plan was to go to our neighbor's village, which was deep in the bush. Melba shared the view that if there were problems, the people would protect her. She laughed and said, "Besides, all I'd have to do was keep my mouth shut." Diana said her bosses liked her work, but she encountered resistance from her co-workers who were

threatened by her presence as a young woman in a higher position than they could ever achieve. She worked very hard to win them over. On the other hand, she felt totally accepted by the family she lived with.

President Kennedy ordered that there was to be no interference with or infiltration attempts against the Peace Corps by intelligence agencies. (Carey, 1970) Pat said there were people who were still trying to link the Peace Corps to CIA activities, but they were unsuccessful. Melba told of an experience she had in Kenya when she and five other Volunteers were vacationing. A black man with a camera followed them to restaurants, beaches, and even other resort towns, and they observed him taking pictures of them. They created a situation to distract him, and one of the women took the film from his camera. They never saw him after that, but it certainly made them curious about what was going on. Kebe, on the other hand, said she never precieved being checked on or spied on in Liberia.

In commenting on how Moslem women in the host country are treated, Ruth said, "Moslem women are not even second class citizens; they are considered possessions, to be seen and not heard, and not even seen in a lot of cases. The Volunteers knew that they were treated differently from the women of the country, but no one seemed to know how to capitalize on it. Ruth realized the election fiasco she observed was the result of Sierra Leone trying to please the United States by holding a democratic election. This desire to please might have been used to reach more women.

## Volunteers' Opinions of Incountry Staff

The Peace Corps can be divided into three parts. There is the headquarters staff who regarded themselves as the "real Peace Corps" with the Volunteers out in the field somewhere. There is the Volunteers who think they are the "true cutting edge of the Peace Corps" with the staff down in Washington with the other bureaucrats. And then there are the country directors, also known as the Reps, and the assistant representatives who supervise each country and are caught in the middle. (Rice, 1985:97) According to Rice (1985) the Reps are in the position of pleasing no one. When the Volunteers were asked their opinion of the incountry staff, they said either they had as little as possible to do with them or a good, well-liked Rep was invariably replaced by a political climber or a martinet.

Kebe said that she rarely went down to Monrovia where the Peace Corps office was located; consequently, she had little contact with the staff. Her philosophy was: "Peace Corps, send me my money every month; send me my medication when I ask for it; otherwise, leave me alone, and I'll leave you alone." Melba said support from the Peace Corps staff was never an issue. "I didn't even bother with them," she said, although she had no problem with the staff. She only went to the Peace Corps office when there were conferences or paper work because the staff was so bureaucratic. They did not understand because they "were so far removed from actually working directly with the

people." The Volunteers have had this opinion of the incountry staff right from the beginning because so many of the staff have never served as Volunteers.

Faye taught for an Episcopal mission and did not have much contact with the Peace Corps staff. She said a female supervisor used to come out and visit from time to time. According to Faye, "She kept tabs on us and made sure everything was going OK." Sally said the Peace Corps staff should have visited in the field more. The office was located in the northern part of Senegal; to get to the southern part of the country you had to pass through the Gambia during the daytime, a trip that took a minimum of eight hours. That is why she said if Volunteers could make it to the capital, the staff was always there to help. Ruth had mentioned the difficulty in communicating with the Peace Corps office in Freetown because of poor roads and downed telephone lines, but she said someone from the Peace Corps office went around to the sites about once a month. They visited the new Volunteers more often, but she and her roommate did not need that much contact.

The other five Volunteers had stories of good Reps and bad Reps. Joan said their nice regional director in the Philippines was replaced by a "real loser" who made some bad public relations moves. "He took our bikes away, made sure we had no luxuries, and was always reporting us to the Peace Corps office. Everybody hated him." Diana said when she arrived in Tonga, the country director was a political appointee who did not know how to do her job.

The Volunteers laughed at her because she always wore matching shoes, purse, and scarf. She resigned and was replaced by a better country director. At least, he would visit the Volunteers at their sites. The two assistant country directors were former Volunteers and really knew how to work with the Volunteers.

According to Pat the excellent country director in Cameroon--he received Cameroon's highest civilian award--was replaced by a political climber who saw being Peace Corps Rep as a step on the career ladder. Her service in Cameroon was mediocre at best. Anne was not impressed favorably with the regional director who was in charge of her program. His support would have bolstered her position of authority in the Food for Peace program. As it was, the Mayor, in whose house she was living, felt free to steal food from the program and serve it to her. On the other hand, she thought that the regional director of the program at Fortaleza did an excellent job for the Volunteers and for the area. Naturally, he was replaced by a horrible director who mismanaged the program. Mary said the director in Ecuador was a very caring person who understood the concerns of the Volunteers. She thought he was doing a great job, and, of course, he was transferred to Afghanistan. Faye seemed satisfied with the female staff member who visited her site regularly in 1965. It was the two female directors of 1976 and 1983 who were viewed as ineffective political appointees and political climbers.



## Volunteers' Opinions of Health Care

Popular literature indicates that the health of the Volunteers was well taken care of by the Peace Corps. (Carey, 1970; Ashabranner, 1971; Rice, 1985) Many of the Volunteers said, "I'm glad I was healthy," when they were asked to comment on the adequacy of the health care. Every Peace Corps program was to have its own Peace Corps doctor. Until 1968 when Congress changed the selective service law, Peace Corps obtained its doctors from the Public Health Service, and the doctors met their military obligations by serving two years in the Peace Corps. After 1968 the problem of providing doctors was addressed by recruiting retired doctors, using incountry doctors, using doctor's assistants or nurses, and having one doctor cover more than one country. Ashabranner (1971:212) wrote that "health lectures are part of training" and that "careful health orientation" is presented by the Peace Corps doctor in each country. Some Volunteers maintained that this did not always happen.

Ruth said knowing what to expect health wise would have helped her understand her treatment at the local hospital when she got dysentery shortly after arriving incountry. Later on, even though she used mosquito netting and took her medication, she had recurring malaria. Ruth said calling the medical care adequate, at least in remote areas, depended on your definition of adequate. If you could get to the capital, they took very good care of you.

People with life-threatening illnesses and serious accident victims were flown to West Germany. Pat said Cameroon had a health office and a doctor who split his time among three countries, but you could always reach the nurse or the aide in the health office. She said she drank untreated water in the villages she traveled to with no consequences.

Mary was very upset there were so many illnesses to guard against in Ecuador, although she thought the in-country health training was well done. She said she boiled the water, watched what she ate, and, except for having dysentery from drinking raw milk, kept her problems to a minimum. There were an Ecuadorian doctor and two American nurses at the Peace Corps office, and she thought they were well qualified.

Diana said the young Peace Corps doctor was "a nice guy" but was inexperienced, and emergency treatment was "iffy." The Tongan hospital was referred to as "the House of Disease" for good reason, and people with serious problems like breast cancer were flown to Hawaii.

Anne said the medical treatment was definitely not adequate in Brazil. When she was in Fortaleza, 400 miles from the Peace Corps doctor, she contracted para-typhoid and Salmonella food poisoning from the convent food. She was treated by a Brazilian medical student, but fortunately the regional director and his wife, who was a nurse, took her home with them to recuperate. Another time she was treated by a Brazilian doctor for terrible menstrual

cramps. The doctor, without examining her, gave her a prescription for "powerful birth control pills." By the time she had finished her service in 1966, there was a Peace Corps doctor, fresh out of residency, stationed in Fortaleza. Faye thought the health service was adequate. There was an Italian doctor in her town and a Peace Corps doctor in the capital, but they had to fly to Monrovia as there was no road to there at that time. When her husband was seriously ill with malaria, he was flown to the capital for treatment. Joan said the health care was alright for them because they were close to Manila, but she worried about the Volunteers in the remote areas. From her village she could communicate with the Peace Corps office by telegram. Once she sent her symptoms by telegram and received this reply: "Dengue fever, good luck." Another time when they thought her husband was having a malaria attack, they rushed him to the Air Force Base Hospital in Manila. She said, "There was always someone available, or we could always get somewhere."

Sally said there was a good Peace Corps doctor in the Northern part of Senegal, but it took a long time to get to him if your site was in the Southern part because it involved a frustrating trip through the Gambia. In case of an emergency, the Peace Corps would fly the Volunteers to the capital or to West Germany. Sally said Volunteers were told not to use the local dispensary, as they were not always hygienic. Both Melba and Kebe had little contact

with the Peace Corps doctor while in the Peace Corps. They thought the medical care must be adequate.

Start with healthy young Volunteers, stress preventive medicine, with pre-exposure rabies vaccine, medicine to prevent malaria, and gamma globulin shots, and hope for the best. That may be a bit unfair, but there were times when the people in remote sites were at risk. Ruth tells of the motorcycle accident victim who was checked into the local hospital, and who checked himself out because he thought the hospital was primitive. Ruth had to tell the hospital personnel the Volunteer was not acting responsibly because of his injuries in order to get him readmitted. The Peace Corps doctor was a ten hour drive over 200 miles of bad roads away. As Ruth said, "That was the best he was going to get." Local hospital conditions might help explain the reluctance of the Washington Peace Corps staff to allow married Volunteers to have their babies incountry.

## Host Country's Problems

The Peace Corps Volunteers were aware of the huge problems of the host countries, and most thought the problems were beyond what the Peace Corps could solve. Melba thought the Peace Corps took too much credit for the little bit of good they did in Kenya. She thought they should have done more, like building schools, building hospitals, bringing in hospital equipment, training the teachers and the hospital personnel. She saw these as genuine needs of Kenya. However, the Peace Corps was not designed to build hospitals and schools for a country. The Peace Corps was to provide Volunteers who would work with the local people on a project the local people wanted. In the case of teachers, the project was education. The Peace Corps was charged with not taking over or duplicating any projects of agencies already established.

All of the Volunteers thought feeding the population was a problem for the host country, although Kebe said malnutrition in babies was due partly to ignorance on the part of the mothers who might feed them the water that rice was boiled in, for example. Mary said the people in Ecuador were interested in any program that would bring them more food; at the time she was there a couple had started a fishpond digging program which the people supported enthusiastically. Faye said Liberia was importing rice in 1965 to feed the population. The slash and burn technique of farming was depleting the land.

A number of the Volunteers said the governments were corrupt, and bribery was rampant. Ruth said she opened her first package from home in the postoffice and gave the employee something he admired. After that her packages always arrived intact, and she always gave gifts to the employee. Other Volunteers were not so fortunate. The Peace Corps frowned on Volunteers paying bribes, but sometimes presents were necessary. Ruth said a retired nun who had never driven needed a license in order to ride her motorcycle; the government employee never gave licenses to anyone unless he received a bribe. Ruth said they gave the employee a present for his wife, and the nun received her license without having to even be tested. Ruth said practices like this made her appreciate her own government. Ruth said maintaining a stable government was also a problem for Sierra Leone. There had been a coup attempt before she arrived, but they still had the bodies of the conspirators on public display. Sally said there was a lower level of government employee called the "fonctionnaire" and that was where most of the bribe taking took place in Senegal. She said everyone knew what was going on; it had almost become part of their culture. On the other hand, she said, "I don't know what we could do to change that; as Westerners we can't go in and say that is wrong." Joan said there was a lot of corruption at the higher levels in the Philippines in 1965. Everything gets stolen; a fire engine which was a gift to the city of

Manila was stolen on the docks and never recovered. Joan said one of the problems that she expects to see addressed in the near future is land reform. She says the land barons are going to be forced to give up some of the land. Anne said there was political corruption in Brazil in 1965, compounded by inflation so bad the banks posted their exchange rate in pencil so it could be updated three times a day.

Pat said Cameroon in 1983 was progressive in trying to modernize the country. There were efforts being made to take electricity, health care, and schools out to the rural areas, and to root out the corruption of the former administration. Diana said that good health care was a problem for Tonga, but she knew of no efforts by the Peace Corps to work on that. On the other hand, Tonga was getting some help from the Peace Corps in its modernization efforts. Volunteers were working on new roads and were giving technical help in the electrification project. The most pressing problem and the biggest project Volunteers were working on was water pollution. Tonga had been dumping sewage in the harbor for years and was now being forced to work on a sewage treatment plant and a project to clean up the harbor. Melba said adequate food and health care were two pressing problems faced by Kenya.

The Volunteers are aware of the insignificance of their effort in the Peace Corps. The problems of the host countries are just too enormous and need a large investment

of money and the commitment of its citizens. But the Volunteers do take pleasure in their small successes. Ruth was pleased that she had shown some local teachers better ways to present new material to their students, and she was hopeful that the people who had been trained to take the Volunteers' places in the workshops continued with the workshops. Anne was pleased that she had made friends with some college students who now knew that all Americans were not alike. One thing that the Volunteers did was act as an example for the women in the countries they served of what a young, educated, independent woman could accomplish in the world controlled by men, but the idea did not come across that the Volunteers realized that. They were not so much showing what women could do as they were showing what Americans could do.



## Help in Returning to Civilian Life

The Volunteers were asked if there were any programs, services, or other help offered by the Peace Corps when they returned to the United States. Diana, who returned from Tonga in 1978 said, "None, I would have liked some. I thought this was the weakest part." Anne, who became a recruiter when she returned from Brazil in 1966, said, "No, there were no programs. We had our readjustment allowance and that was it. You were dumped back in society." Pat also became a recruiter when she returned from Cameroon in 1985. She said, "There really isn't any job placement once you get out. They give you information about getting your resume together, and you get a year's noncompetitive eligibility."

Volunteers found their own way back to civilian life with little help from the Peace Corps or the United States government. Congress voted not to approve the career planning board set up by President Kennedy to provide career assistance to returning Volunteers. (Carey, 1970: 211) It was thought that because of their training and experience, Returned Volunteers would have no job difficulties. It soon became apparent that some Volunteers needed assistance; they were helped by the privately funded Career Information Service which became in 1964, with Congressional approval, the Division of Returned Volunteer Services (RVS). The RVS offers counseling services to Volunteers for up to one year following their

completion of service. None of the Volunteers used this service; in fact, most of them did not know about it.

Some of the Volunteers mentioned the year's noncompetitive eligibility; Sally called it "a little priority on government jobs." It really means that Volunteers are allowed to take the Federal Service Entrance Examination on a noncompetitive basis for up to one year after their Peace Corps service ends. They may receive federal employment provided they satisfactorily complete their service and pass the examination. That was how Mary obtained her employment with the Social Security Administration. Mary said, upon completing her service, "I really did not know what I was going to do, and Peace Corps was not offering me anything, not even an idea." She said someone mentioned noncompetitive eligibility for a federal job, but noone explained how you got it. An interviewer at the Employment Office yelled at her for ignoring this opportunity and then explained what steps she should take to secure federal employment.

Several of the Volunteers said the readjustment allowance was the only help they were aware of. Melba said, "What they did was, they gave us \$2000--at the time it was \$2000--in what they called a readjustment allowance." This readjustment allowance is provided for in the Peace Corps Act:

Volunteers shall be entitled to receive a readjustment allowance at a rate not to exceed \$75 for each month of satisfactory service as determined by the President. (1st PCAR, 1962:8)

According to Pat, this allowance is now \$200 a month.

Joan said she and her husband received "just a plane ticket and a certificate" when they came home from the Philippines in 1967. Faye said she was encouraged to go into teaching, particularly in the big cities, when she returned from Liberia in 1967. There were typical experiences of Volunteers everywhere. When their service was over, they came home and started working out their career plans. For some it meant finding a job as soon as possible; for others it meant returning to college to prepare for a new career. For all of them it meant getting on with their lives--without the huge salaries, bonuses, or government jobs that early anti-Peace Corps propaganda said awaited their return. (Ashabranner, 1971:319-321)

#### Adjustments to Civilian Life

Life magazine popularized the term "re-entry crisis" (Carey, 1970:214) in an article in 1963 on the first returning Volunteers and their readjustment problems. Everyone has adjustment problems of one kind or another; as Sally said, "When you go from one world to another, there are adjustments." However, not everyone had major re-entry problems. Diana said that she missed the "Tongan sense of humor" and found that "everyone takes everything so seriously here." She said, "Why get so distraught over such absurd things?"

Ruth Diana, and Sally said the fast pace of life in the United States took some getting accustomed to. Ruth

said she bought a house out in the country as soon as she could afford it in order to "avoid the rat race." Diana and Mary said they could not get used to the waste of everything from food to natural resources. Diana said she refused to use styrofoam containers, and Mary said she was appalled by the huge amounts of meat served and consumed at every meal. Anne said she would see a large house and think, "How many Brazilians would it sleep?" Sally said going from one extreme to another was a shock; in Senegal she thought a chocolate bar and soft toilet paper were luxury items. Pat was bothered by the excessive waste, but she said the obsession with cleanliness and sterility seemed so time consuming and unnecessary. Anne said she was shocked by "mini-skirts and by women ironing their hair;" she learned to cope by buying a wardrobe of mini-skirts and by letting her hair grow long .

One of the adjustments many Volunteers have to make involves a change in the way they think about their country. Ruth said she came to appreciate the United States more. She thinks that Volunteers recognize that their own system of government is so much better than that of other countries. Other Volunteers discover flaws in the United States that they had not seen before. Anne thought her stay in Brazil let her see the United States from an outsider's point of view, and she never wants to lose that. Even today she says that she has not adjusted fully to the materialism of the American society. Diana

said she became aware in Tonga on how terrible our overseas relations are. She finds that there is so little understanding of the cultural differences and so much arrogance that American government officials know what is best for other countries. It is her hope that Volunteers will start to have more influence on our society. Joan said, "You do not really appreciate home until you have lived with a different culture." On the other hand, she found a kind of reverse culture shock at first with her family. This, too, is a common problem for Volunteers who have had twenty months or more of becoming very knowledgeable about the ways of living and working in a foreign culture and who have often adopted many of the local customs. This becoming accustomed to the host country's culture in addition to being out of touch with what is going on in the United States can cause problems for the Volunteers.

Not everyone viewed the transition as painful. Melba said she thought her leisurely three months long trip home helped her escape having readjustment problems; it gave her a chance to change her frame of mind and return to the fast pace of the United States. She missed hitchhiking, and she resented having to lock doors and being on guard against crime, but she enjoyed the challenge of developing her own style of life in the United States. Mary said that her family's life style is very different from that of her parents'; her values, priorities, and goals changed as a result of her service.

## Families' and Friends' opinions of Service

A Harris poll in 1963 showed that "a massive 75 percent of all Americans approved" of the Peace Corps. (Rice, 1985:254) Before its creation the Peace Corps had fired the imagination of American youth; to keep the public enthusiasm mounting, Sargent Shriver established the "Division of Public Information which produced stories and news releases on the Peace Corps and dealt directly with the media." (Rice, 1985:247) The popularity of President Kennedy and the approval of the American media also helped the Peace Corps' public relations group present the Peace Corps in a very favorable light. All of the Volunteers thought their parents felt pride in the service and their friends felt envy.

Two of the interesting comments from fathers were: "No daughter of mine is going to be a missionary," and "May I tell my friends that you are a missionary now." Anne said she told her father, who made the first comment, "Come on, Dad. You were a Zionist when you were young." She said her parents did not really tell their children what to do. Diana, who had had a sometimes stormy relationship with her minister father, told him he could call it whatever he pleased. Anne said that her dad was not pleased when she joined, but he later took great pride in her service and showed her letters to everyone while her sister was envious of her interesting experience. Diana said her parents would have liked her service better if it

had been religious service rather than government service, but they took what they could get. Their one complaint was that she was so far away, which was a complaint voiced by many of the families.

Melba said she was an only child; and it was ever so difficult for her parents and her grandmother to accept her going so far away. Faye said her family's admiration was tempered by worrying about her being so far away. Her mother sent her an article about a Volunteer being eaten by a crocodile and wrote her to be careful. Joan said, "Our families were very proud; they were caught up in the Kennedy aura, too." Their friends were envious of their exciting experience in the Peace Corps. Ruth was sure she had her family's support in her Peace Corps service; her parents visited her at her site, and her brother came over at the end of her second year and traveled around West Africa with her. Pat said her family saw Peace Corps service as a good opportunity for her, but they did not like her being away so long. After her first year of service, her mother met her in Europe so they could vacation together. Mary said her parents threw a welcome home party for her upon her return; she was thrilled because her family had never had a welcome home party for anyone. Kebe's mother was very proud of her daughter's four years service in the Peace Corps and was able to visit her at her site. Since Kebe's stay has turned into fifteen years of living in Liberia, her mother looks

forward to visits home by her daughter every two years. Sally said she was not surprised when her father told her that she did not have to go to Africa to teach, she could teach in Flint. Nevertheless, he took pride in her service and saved all of her letters home. She said her friends considered her "somewhat of a maverick" and expected her to do something unusual with her life.

These responses of family and friends are typical of the Peace Corps experience. Most parents with reservations about service in the Peace Corps were won over by the positiveness of the experience for their children. The Peace Corps did its part to try to make anxious parents feel more secure. A division of the Peace Corps called Special Services deals with all personal emergencies, such as queries from parents who have not had a letter from their child for some time or troubles at home in a Volunteer's family. This division definitely performs a public relations service for the Peace Corps.

#### Current Situation

At a conference of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers held in March, 1965, Bill D. Moyers, then Special Assistant to the President, challenged the Volunteers:

You are special. And when you come back from abroad, if you don't think yourself special, you will simply disappear into the bog of affluent living--you won't make a difference--and your contributions, as well as your opportunities as a former and continuing Peace Corps Volunteer, will be lost. (Carey, 1970:216)

Though the Volunteers have been out of the Peace Corps for several years, they still reflect that commitment.



Faye, who left the Peace Corps in 1967, just recently resigned as Director of Programs at the Children's Museum: she is planning to go to graduate school this Fall. Joan has been teaching in the public schools since leaving the Peace Corps in 1967. She has completed a Masters in Education and has gone through the Intern in Administration program in Flint. Anne finished her service in 1966 and worked for the Peace Corps for three years. She is a freelance writer and a parttime college teacher of writing. Diana returned to college after leaving the Peace Corps in 1978 because she wanted to go into social work. She now works in academic advising at a university. Melba's service ended in 1971, and she returned to college to earn a degree in social work. She works for the Michigan Department of Education as a counselor. Pat became a Peace Corps recruiter shortly after leaving the Peace Corps in 1985. Mary obtained a job with the Social Security Administration in 1978 and is still working there. Kebe is working as the Assistant Administrator for the Lutheran Bishop of Liberia; she left the Peace Corps in 1977. Ruth finished her service in 1977 and is now working for a church pictorial directory company. She is taking small business administration classes in preparation for starting her own business. Sally is working for a merchandising company while her husband attends graduate school; she finished her service in 1978. These Volunteers are still making a difference.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

It had been said that the Peace Corps was an idea whose time had come. Churches and private organizations had been sending volunteers to areas all over the world to work at the grassroots level helping people learn to do things for themselves for a number of years. But the numbers were small, the money came from private sources, and the work took on the flavor of missionary work, a label not relished by some people. A government sponsored youth service had been proposed many times in previous years, but it did not become a reality until 1961. Several factors contributed to the creation of the Peace Corps, not the least of which was the need for an exciting campaign issue in a dull election. However, the exciting issue did not fade away after the election, and the need to provide an outlet for the enthusiasm of a whole generation of idealistic young Americans who responded to John F. Kennedy's challenge to make a commitment to humanity and to country could not be ignored. Add the idea of Volunteers on a noble anti-Communist crusade in Third World countries and a lot of luck, and the Peace Corps is created.

The Peace Corps' mission was and remains "to promote world peace and friendship." The three goals have always been to send volunteers to interested countries to help them meet their needs for trained manpower, to promote a better understanding of Americans among the people served,

and to promote better understanding of people of other countries among the American people. These goals are being met by the Peace Corps, and it is these goals that have played an important part in the continuing popularity of the Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps appeals to that indefinable characteristic, whether it is dedication, the social service motive, or idealism, that so many young Americans possess. The Peace Corps service is a chance to make a difference in the world, a chance to help the less fortunate, a chance to pay back for some of the benefits received. It is a chance to serve without being a missionary. It is a chance to put off making a decision on what to do career-wise without looking like a vagabond. The Peace Corps still meets the need of Americans to do good and be loved.

The women Volunteers have not felt that they have been discriminated against by the Peace Corps. The training is the same, the pay is the same, and the rules and regulations are applied equally. The jobs are the same with the exception that the Peace Corps yields to the demand by host countries for male Volunteers, fearing (sometimes correctly) that confronting cultural values might offend government officials who would diminish their request or withdraw it completely.

The literature on the Peace Corps has paid little or no attention to women's rights or women's concerns,

assuming, rightly or wrongly, that there are no problems in this area. In fact, it is only recently--mostly since the 1985 UN Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi--that the literature is paying some attention to the Third World development's effects on women. The Peace Corps did not start addressing the roles women play in the communities where Volunteers work with any effective action until Fiscal Year 1986. In the meantime, the female Volunteers have had to rely on the fact that they are Americans first, and women second, in order to effectively do their jobs in some of the countries.

But there is more to the strength of these women Volunteers than just the knowledge that they are Americans. All have had the support and backing of family and friends, although several expressed the belief that they were different from their family and friends. They wanted to be in charge of their own lives and destinies and to set a different course for themselves from that of their parents. These Peace Corps Volunteers believe in their own worth as individuals and do not let gender stand in their way. Their orientation is toward traditional roles for these women have gone into teaching and social service work or have taken jobs that have allowed them the freedom to spend time on home and family. With the exception of one Volunteer who belonged briefly to NOW, the Volunteers do not particularly like the rhetoric of women's liberation and do not identify with the movement or tend to become involved with feminist organizations.

## POINTS TO COVER WITH THE WOMEN RPCV

What led you to join the Peace Corps? What years did you serve? In what country? How much schooling?

Tell me about your training. Where did it take place? What did it consist of? Was it the same for males and females? Were many Volunteers deselected during training?

Tell me about your actual service in the host country. What incountry agency did you work for? What were your actual duties? What were your living conditions? Were you with other Peace Corps Volunteers? Any service performed beyond your job duties?

Were there any problems you did not expect?

Were there any benefits you did not expect?

How do you think you were viewed by the host country? Did you feel any fear while in the host country? Did you experience any surveillance? What was the woman's role in the host country? How did the males view foreign females?

Did you receive the support you needed from the incountry Peace Corps staff?

What kind of health care was provided? Was it adequate? Were doctors or nurses provided or available?

What were the major problems of the host country?

I read that there were programs in place to ease the Volunteer's return to civilian life. Did you receive any help from the Peace Corps after you returned?

What kind of adjustments or accommodations did you have to make to life back in the States? Were you more aware of job inequalities, wage differences, discrimination because of gender?

How did your family and your friends view your service in the Peace Corps?

What are you doing now?

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